A. V. Williams. —

August th 16 1789.-

31.

THE Great Importance OF A Religious LIFE CONSIDERED:

To which are added,

Some Morning and Evening PRAYERS.

The TWENTY-SEVENTH EDITION, Corrected.

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1787.

A SHORT CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR

Of the following

TREATISE.

IT may add Weight, perhaps, to the Reflections contained in the following Pages, to inform the Reader that the Author's Life was one uniform Exemplar of those Precepts, which, with so generous a Zeal and such an elegant and affecting Simplicity of Style, he endeavours to recommend to general Practice. He left others to contend for Modes of Faith, and inflame themselves and the World with endless Controversy: it was the wiser Purpose of his more ennobled Aim, to act up to those clear Rules of Conduct which Revelation hath graciously prescribed. He possessed by Temper every moral Virtue; by Religion every Christian Grace. He had a Humanity that melted at every Distress; a

Charity which not only thought no Evil, but suspected none. He exercised his Profession with a Skill and Integrity, which nothing could equal but the disinterested Motive that animated his Labours, or the amiable Modesty which accompanied all his Virtues. He employed his Industry, not to gratify his own Desires; no Man indulged himself less: not to accumulate useless Wealth; no Man more disdained so unworthy a Pursuit: it was for the decent Advancement of his Family, for the generous Assistance of his Friends, for the ready Relief of the Indigent. How often did he exert his distinguished Abilities, yet refuse the Reward of them, in Defence *of the Widow, the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him!* In a word, few have ever passed a more useful, not one a more blameless Life; and his whole Time was employed either in doing Good, or in meditating it. He died on the 6th Day of *April* 1743, and lies buried under the Cloister of *Lincoln's Inn* Chapel. MEM. PAT. OPT. MER. FIL. DIC.

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PREFACE.

THE Design of the following Treatise is, to awaken in the Minds of unthinking Men, a serious Sense of Religion and a true Concern for the Interest of their immortal Souls: a Design, at all Times seasonable and necessary, but more especially at this Time, when we see such Numbers of Persons carried away with the Love of Pleasure, and such Arts invented and Methods used to gratify their corrupt and vicious Taste.

Whoever reflects, with a due Concern, upon the Excesses and Debaucheries which have overspread this Nation, and has any Regard for the Honour of God, and the Interest of that Holy Religion which Christ Jesus came down from Heaven to establish upon the Earth, will easily be persuaded to think, that all Endeavours possible ought to be used, to stem the

Torrent

Torrent of Wickedness that is broken in upon us, and to prevent the mischievous Effects of the public Diversions, *which the Generality of People are grown so fond of; I mean the* Masquerades *and* Plays: *those Seminaries of Vice and Irreligion, where every Thing is contrived to inflame the Passions and corrupt the tender Minds of young Persons; and which, I am persuaded, have greatly contributed to that general Neglect of God and Religion, which is so visible amongst us.*

Whether any Thing that is here offered, will be effectual to draw Men off from the Love of those deceitful Vanities, *I cannot say: but sure I am (if the Scripture is to be the Rule of our Practice, as most undoubtedly it is), it must be the Duty of every one, not only to take care that he give no Encouragement by his* Example, *to these licentious and ensnaring Entertainments (to which I doubt not but many owe their fatal Miscarriages), but to do what in him lies, to dissuade others, especially* those under his Care, *from resorting to* Places *of so much* Danger *and* Infection.

It must be confessed, that it is no easy Matter to prevail on those who are carried away by the false Maxims and Practice of a corrupt and

debauched World, to renounce their sensual Gratifications, for the more refined Pleasures of Virtue and Religion: However, the difficulty of the Work should not discourage any one from attempting it. I have therefore endeavoured, according to my Ability, to lay before the Reader, in the following pages, the Advantages attending a good Life; in Hope, that whoever seriously considers what is there urged, will be convinced, there is no Pleasure to be compared with that of a good Conscience; and that Religion really is, what it was designed by the great Author of it to be, the only solid Foundation of our present, as well as future, Happiness.

I am sensible that what is there offered, hath been with much greater Advantage inculcated in many of those excellent Discourses, which are already extant: yet, when I consider how much Good has been done by those small Tracts, which have been printed and dispersed of late Years, I am encouraged to hope that this little Treatise may be of some Service; as a check at least, to that prodigious Thirst after sensual Pleasures, which seems to be the Disease of the present Age, and which must undoubtedly destroy the Love of God wherever it prevails.

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I have added some Prayers at the End of this Book, not with an Intention to prescribe to any one, but to assist those who are not furnished with better Helps; well knowing how important *a Duty Prayer is, and how highly necessary it is for every good Christian to be frequent in his Addresses to the Throne of Grace, if ever he expects the Favour of God, and hopes* to find GRACE to help him in Time of Need.

May God of his great Goodness give a Blessing to these weak Endeavours, and make them instrumental to His Glory, and the Good of Souls!

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GREAT IMPORTANCE

OF A

RELIGIOUS LIFE.

CHAP. I.

WHAT *must I do to be saved?* was a Question, which the trembling and astonished Jailer put to *Paul* and *Silas*, when he saw the Prison-Doors opened in a miraculous Manner: a Question of the utmost Moment and Importance, and which it nearly concerns us all to be well resolved in. For, if there be a Life after this, and we do not die like the *Beasts that perish*; if Death does not put a final Period to our Beings; but when this short Life is ended, we enter upon the Regions of Eternity, and shall be for ever happy or miserable, according

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as we demean ourſelves in this ſhort Tin
Trial and Probation: If this be the
and Condition of Mankind (as the V
of Reaſon, the Dictates of Conſcience,
the Holy Scriptures, do loudly procla
is), how does it behove every one of u
inquire, what we muſt do to attain ever
ing Life; and to conſider, whether we
in the Way that leads to Heaven and H
pineſs? or, if we have been ſo unhapp
to wander out of it, how we may rec
and return to it again?

This is an Inquiry that deſerves our
moſt Diligence and attention. For if
are ignorant of the Will of God, or, kn
ing it, will not follow or be led by
unerring Light, but ſuffer ourſelves to
hurried away by our unruly Paſſions in
Purſuit of the Things of this Life; we
wretched and miſerable, blind and nak
notwithſtanding all our attainments:
we ſhall one Day be convinced to
Sorrow, that there is no Folly like
of preferring Things temporal to Thi
eternal. Whatever *the Children of*

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World may think, and how much ſoever they may applaud their own Wiſdom in contriving Schemes to be Rich and Great; yet if their chief Care and Concern is taken up about theſe things, it is certain they will be found *Fools*, when weighed in the Balance of true Wiſdom.

He that is truly wiſe will conſider, that he has a Soul, as well as a Body to take care of; a ſpiritual and immortal Subſtance which can never die; but when enlarged from that Priſon in which it is now confined, muſt live for ever, either in Happineſs or Miſery. Shall we then be ſo fooliſh, as to confine our ambitious Purſuits within the narrow Limits of this World, without conſidering what will be the condition of onr Souls hereafter? Shall we labour and toil for *the Meat that periſheth*; and be cold and indifferent about the momentous Concerns of Eternity? Shall we ſpare no Pains in order to increaſe our temporal Eſtates, and to lay up *Goods for many Years*; when we know not, but *this Night our ſouls may be required of us?* And if we have made no proviſion

for their everlasting Welfare; what will it avail us that we have been Rich and Great in this World?

The Fashion of this World passeth away, and all the Glory and Splendor of it will, in a little Time, have an End. How great then is the Folly, and how deplorable will the Condition of that man be, who, instead of *seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness in the first place*, has consumed his Days in seeking after the Honours and Riches of this World, and has tired himself out in the Pursuit of those Things which are of no value in the Sight of God? Wretched Stupidity! *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own Soul?* Time bears no Proportion to Eternity. The most exalted Pleasures of this Life, which at best are but of a short Continuance, can never compensate for the Loss of that Happiness, which *God has prepared for them that love him*. How miserably then will that man be deceived, who places all his Hopes and Happiness in the poor and empty Satisfactions of a sensual Life; who looks no farther than the present

Mat. xvi. 6.

Time,

Time, and lives as if he cared not what became of him hereafter, provided he may but enjoy *the Pleasures of Sin for a Season!*

But some, perhaps, may ask, Where is the Man so abandoned to Folly and Madness, as to be content, for the Sake of a present short-lived Happiness, to be miserable for ever hereafter? I wish indeed there were none such: But, alas! there are too many that make this sad Choice. Not that any one chooses Evil for the sake of Evil, or prefers Misery before Happiness (for a Desire of Happiness is inseparable from our Nature); but in the Scripture account of Things, he is said to choose Destruction, who walks in the broad Way that leads to it. For God has been pleased to *set before us Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing:* Rewards on the one Hand, to encourage our Obedience; and Punishments on the other, to deter us from Sin. As he, therefore, that obeys the Commandments of God, chooses *Life*; so he that transgresses them, chooses *Death: that* Death which God has threatened to the Sinner, even Death eternal. For the *Wages of Sin is Death*, and he that chooses the one (let

Deut. xxx 19.

his Pretences be what they may) must be said to choose the other; because he knows (at least it is his own Fault, if he does not know) that *God will render to every Man according to his Deeds: To them, who, by patient Continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality, eternal Life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth evil.*

Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

See, then, what a wretched Piece of Folly the Sinner is guilty of, (how wise soever he may think himself, and how much soever he may despise the sober Part of Mankind), when he first enters upon a Life of Wickedness. For he is then evidencing to all the World, that, *Life* and *Death* being set before him, he has determined his choice to the latter:—A Choice so absurd and unaccountable, that, did not Experience convince us that it is often made, we could hardly think it possible for a rational Creature to be so blind. *O Blessed God! hast thou set before us Happiness and Misery, Joys unspeakable and full of*

of Glory on the one Hand, and Torments endless and intolerable on the other! hast thou given us the Light of Reason to guide us, and superadded that of thy Holy Spirit to illuminate and instruct us; hast thou implanted in our Natures a Dread of, and Aversion from, Pain and Misery, and an insatiable and never-ceasing Thirst after Happiness; and is it possible for us, after all this, to be so blind and senseless, such Enemies to our own Souls, and so regardless of their eternal Welfare, as to prefer the dark Ways of Sin and Misery before those blessed Paths that lead to the bright Regions of Bliss and Glory!—Alas! such wretched Fools are too many among us, who, notwithstanding all that thou hast done for us, will not hearken, nor be advised, but run headlong into the Ways of Sin and Destruction.

This indeed is a melancholy Consideration: and what shall we say to awaken Men out of this fatal Lethargy, and to inspire them with a just Sense of their Danger? what, but intreat them to consider, that, *unless they repent, they will certainly perish? For the Wrath of God is revealed against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of*

Acts xvii. 30, 31. *Men :—and* though *God winked at the Times of Ignorance*; yet *now he commandeth all Men every where to repent*; *because he hath appointed a Day, in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained*; *whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.* In that awful day,

Rev. vi. 16, 17. Sinners *will in vain call to the Mountains and Rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb.*— For, when *the great Day of his Wrath is come, who shall* then *be able to stand?*— Who, indeed, shall be able to stand before the Face of an incensed God, and hear him pronounce that dreadful Sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels?*—Ah! who can bear an Eternity

Is. xxxiii. 14. of Horror and Despair? *Who can dwell* with implacable Fiends *in everlasting Burnings?*

These are Considerations of infinite Moment and Concern, and sufficiently shew us the great Necessity of *denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and living righteously,*

teouſly, ſoberly and godlily, in this preſent World. But becauſe the weightieſt Truths, when their Conſequences are not immediately felt, are too apt to be diſregarded; I ſhall enlarge a little upon the great Importance of a religious Life, by endeavouring to prove theſe *three* Things:

I. That there is no ſolid Happineſs to be attained in this Life, but in the Practice of Religion.

II. That as Religion is the only Thing that can make us happy while we live, ſo there is nothing but a good Life can give us any comfortable Proſpect, when we come to die.

III. That a conſcientious Obſervance of the Duties of Religion will not only make us live happily and die comfortably; but, what is infinitely beyond all this, will moſt certainly be rewarded with eternal Happineſs in the Life to come.

Firſt, then, I ſhall endeavour to prove, *That there is no ſolid Happineſs to be attained in this Life but in the Practice of Religion.*

It has ever been the great Artifice of the Devil, to poſſeſs the Minds of unthinking Men with an Opinion, that Religion is a ſour, moroſe, ill-natured Thing; an Enemy to whatever is pleaſant and cheaſful; and that whoever engages in the Practice of it, muſt from that Inſtant renounce all the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of this Life. But as the *Devil is the Father of Lies*, it is no wonder that he ſets every Thing before us in a falſe and deceitful Light: It was by theſe Means he deceived our firſt unhappy Parents, and it is by the ſame Methods he endeavours to betray their too credulous Poſterity. He is continually repreſenting *Evil as Good, and Good as Evil; putting Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs.* He knows that there is ſuch a Beauty and Comelineſs in Religion, as no one can behold it but with Love and Admiration; and therefore he endeavours to draw a Veil over its Luſtre, and to raiſe in our Minds frightful Ideas concerning it. And too many, alas! are miſled by ſuch falſe and unjuſt Repreſentations.

But

But would Men be perſuaded once to make the Experiment; would they forſake the dangerous Paths of Sin, and walk in the Way that leads to everlaſting Happineſs; would they retire from the Noiſe and Tumult of a looſe and diſordered Life, and liſten to the ſtill Voice of Reaſon and Religion, they would quickly find how groſsly they have been cheated, and wonder how it was poſſible they ſhould ſo long have been deceived. They would ſoon diſcover, and then admire, *the Beauty of Holineſs*, and be thoroughly convinced that there is no Pleaſure like that of a good Conſcience; no real and ſolid Happineſs but what reſults from a Life of Virtue and Holineſs. They would then bleſs the happy Change they had made, and would not part with their Intereſt in Heaven for the greateſt Enjoyments this World could give them. All thoſe empty Pleaſures which once captivated and enſnared them, would then appear mean and contemptible, and nothing would be thought of any real Value, but what ſets them forward in the Way of Salvation.

O happy Man! (whosoever Thou art) that hast made this noble Trial, and by a true and sincere Repentance art restored to the Favour and Love of God! Thou hast *turned away thine Eyes from beholding Vanity*, and canst now look up with Confidence to God, and relish the Pleasures of a virtuous Life. How is thy Mind filled with Love and Joy and Admiration, when Thou considerest, that by the Grace and Goodness of God, Thou art rescued out of the Jaws of the devouring Lion, and art delivered from Fear and Shame and Self-condemnation: the sure Attendants of a guilty Conscience!

We may have some Idea of the Happiness of such a Man, by considering what is the Pleasure of a redeemed Captive when restored to his Country, his Liberty, and his Friends; or of a Mariner got safe to Shore after a Storm, wherein he was every Moment in Expectation of being swallowed up by the Deep. And yet it must be owned, the Comparison falls infinitely short: For, what Slavery is so great as that of a Soul under the Bondage and Dominion of Sin? Or, what are the most terrible Dangers of

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the Sea, when compared with those to which the Sinner is continually exposed?

But have not some, it may be asked, made Trial of Religion, and yet have found no Satisfaction therein; as may be concluded from their returning again to their former Course of Life? It is true, there are some Instances (and sad ones they are, God knows) of such, who *after they have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and been made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, have yet fallen away*, and entered again into a Life of Sin and Debauchery. But has this been owing to a Dislike of Religion? By no means; but rather to a want of Care in not avoiding the Company which has formerly seduced them; or to a Forgetfulness, or at least a Neglect, of the Vows and Resolutions they have made; or, it may be, they have fallen under some violent Temptation, which they have not so vigorously resisted as they might and ought to have done: instances, however, of this kind, I trust, are but rare. Whereas, on the other hand, how many are there, who having forsaken the

Company and Converſation of the Wicked; and, having lamented the Folly and Madneſs of their paſt Lives, have, from being the Slaves of Sin and Satan, become the Servants of God? Theſe will tell you, from their own Experience, that they have found more true Peace and Satisfaction in conquering one vicious Habit, than ever they met with in the moſt ſenſual Enjoyment; that all their paſt ſinful Pleaſures yield them now no other Fruits, than thoſe bitter ones of Shame and Remorſe: That in Religion, on the contrary, they find ſuch a Spring of Comfort continually refreſhing their Souls, as they would not part with for all that this World can poſſibly give them; that they taſte ſuch a Pleaſure in the Service of God, as makes them, with holy *David*, de-
Pſalm xxiii. 4. ſire *to dwell in the Houſe of the Lord all the Days of their Lives, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to viſit his Temple*; and, like him, eſteem it better to *be a Door-keeper in the Houſe of the Lord*, one of the meaneſt of God's Servants, *than to dwell in the Tents of Ungodlineſs*, amidſt the Delights and Pleaſures of a wicked and debauched World.

Indeed,

Indeed, nothing can give a Man so exquisite a Satisfaction, as to reflect upon the Actions of a well-spent Life; to consider that he has made God his Friend, and secured an Interest in the Favour of Him, who is the eternal Source and Fountain of all Good; infinite in Mercy and Loving-kindness, as well as in Power; not only able, but willing and ready, to help and assist him in all Difficulties: a Being to whom he may have Recourse under all Trials and Temptations, under the greatest Calamities and Troubles of Life; to whom he may lay open all his Wants and Infirmities, pour forth all his Sorrows and Afflictions, and may at all Times with Confidence look up, as being assured that he has a powerful Intercessor in Heaven, *Jesus* Col. i. 1
Christ the Righteous, *in whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins*; and *who is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them.* Heb. vi 25.
I say, for a Man to consider these Things; to think that he is answering the End of his Creation; that he is doing

doing the Work for which he is sent into the World; that he is become a *Member of Christ, a Child of God, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven:* How must such Thoughts chear and refresh his soul with a solid, substantial, and lasting pleasure; in Comparison whereof all the vain and empty Enjoyments of this World are as nothing.

But then, on the contrary, for a wicked Man to consider, that *the Face of the Lord is against them that do Evil,* and consequently that he is in the Number of those against whom God has declared his displeasure; that, instead of *working out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling,* he is daily *heaping up to himself Wrath against the Day of Wrath;* and though (it may be) he is now *cloathed with Purple and fine Linen, and fares sumptuously every Day;* though he may at present live in all the Gaiety and Splendor, the Pomp and Luxury, of a great Fortune, yet there will come a Time (and, for aught he knows, it may not be many Moments off) when he shall be stript of all his Pleasures and Enjoyments, and want even *a Drop of Water to cool his Tongue:*—

alm cxiv. 5.

Surely, such Thoughts as these must strike the Sinner with Horror and Amazement, and, like *Belshazzar* when he saw the *Hand-writing upon the Wall*, make him tremble, even in the midst of his greatest Mirth and Jollity.

And can a Man with such Reflections in his Mind (and these, or something like these, will be sure to haunt the Sinner) be said to be happy? Are the Stings of Conscience, the Terrors of an Almighty Judge, and the dreadful Expectations of God's Vengeance, consistent with a state of Happiness?—Alas! the Libertine may flatter himself as he pleases; and think to deceive others, by putting on an Air of Gaiety and Pleasantness; but, it is certain, his Mind can never be long at rest, while he carries about him a faithful Monitor, that will be continually upbraiding him for his Folly and Madness; representing before his Eyes the Dangers he is exposed to, and crossing him, as it were, in his Way, while he is in full Pursuit of his unlawful Pleasures.—And though he may perhaps be able sometimes to silence the Clamours

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of this troublesome Companion, by mere dint of Noise and Extravagance; yet when his Passions abate (as they will not always bear to be upon the Stretch) and the Man grows cool, he will find the Upbraidings of his Conscience return upon him with the greater Violence. The Shame and Anguish, the Horror and Confusion, that he will then feel, will infinitely overbalance all the Satisfactions he can meet with in the Enjoyment of his sinful Pleasures.

I own, indeed, this is not the Case of every Sinner. A Man, by a long Course of Wickedness, may arrive at such an hardened State, as to be incapable of any virtuous Impressions; his Soul may be seared, as it were, with an hot Iron, and be fallen into such a deep and fatal Lethargy, as nothing perhaps shall be able to awaken it, till it comes to feel the very Torments of the Damned. But no one, I believe, will think this to be a State of Happiness.

The truth is, if we consider a wicked Man with respect to this world only, abstractedly from what will be his Portion hereafter, we shall find that there are many

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and great Evils to which he is exposed, besides the Torments of a guilty Conscience. Are not Pains and Aches, Rottenness and Diseases, the natural Effects of Lust and Intemperance? Poverty and broken Fortunes, of Pride and Prodigality? Does not Passion, and Anger, and Revenge, frequently expose Men to mischievous, and, many times, fatal Quarrels and Contentions? Robbery, Theft, and Murder, bring upon others a shameful and untimely End? How many Evils are there in the World, that are the immediate Effects of Men's Vices! *From whence comes Wars and Fightings among you?* says St. *James*; *come they not hence, even of your Lusts that war in your Members?* And from the same fatal Source are derived many of those other Evils and Calamities which some Men labour under. If we trace them to their Original, we shall find them to be the natural Fruits of Men's Lusts and Passions, and to have proceeded from their covetous and ambitious Desires, and the Gratification of their unruly Lusts and Appetites. Indeed, how can it be otherwise, if we consider, *That the Curse of the Lord is in the*

Jam. iv.

Prov. iii 33.

iii. *the House of the Wicked; and that Evil pursueth Sinners?* How can any Thing but Misery attend him, who has provoked the anger of an Almighty God?

Let us now consider, what is the Lot and Portion of good Men in this World; and whether the Practice of Virtue and Righteousness is not the most likely way a Man can take to promote his present as well as future Happiness, and to make his Pilgrimage here on Earth a State of tolerable Ease and Comfort.

Solomon had as much Experience of the Pleasures of the World as ever Man had, and tried as many Ways to make himself happy as his Heart could devise; i. having *kept nothing from his Eyes that they desired; nor with-held his Heart from any Joy*; and yet, when he came to cast up the Account, he found this to be the Sum of it, *that all was Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* Accordingly, when he is instructing his Son in the Ways of true Happiness, he advises him to *get Wisdom and Understanding*: for, *Wisdom*, says he, *is the principal Thing: therefore get Wisdom; and with all thy getting, get Understanding.* And,

as

as an Encouragement to do so, he tells him, that *happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding: For the Merchandize of it is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold. She is more precious than Rubies, and all the Things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* This Wisdom and Understanding, which he recommends, as a Treasure of so great Value, is not *the Wisdom of this World* (for that is *Foolishness with God*, 1 Cor. iii. 19.); but it is *the Wisdom that cometh from above*, which will make us wise unto Salvation: the Wisdom of living in the Fear and Love of God, and in a strict Obedience to his Commandments. *The Fear of the Lord*, says he, *is the Beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding.* Or, as it is in *Job*, *Behold the Fear of the Lord, That is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil is Understanding.*

Prov. iii 13, &c.

Prov. ix. 10.

Job xxxii 28.

Behold

Behold then the Excellency of Religion! it not only ſecures to us a Reverſion of endleſs Happineſs, but makes our Lives at preſent eaſy and delightful: the very paths of Religion are pleaſant, as well as the End to which they lead. It is true, Vice has its preſent Pleaſures as well as Virtue: but then there is this Difference between them; the Pleaſures of Sin are weak, ſhort-lived, and only varniſhed over; they begin and end almoſt in the ſame Moment, and can never be purchaſed but at the Expence of much ſucceeding Trouble, Shame, and Self-condemnation. Whereas thoſe which reſult from a holy and religious Life, are ſubſtantial, ſincere, ſteady and ſecure: they leave no Diſguſt upon the Mind; no Loathings and Diſlike; are neither accompanied with Shame, nor followed with Remorſe or Sadneſs: thoſe bitter Allays to all ſinful Gratifications. "We may talk of Pleaſures and Enjoy-
"ments, ſays a * *Great Prelate* of our
"Church, but no man ever truly found
"them, till he became acquainted with
"God, and was made ſenſible of his

* *Archb. of* York, *in his Volume of Sermons*, p. 501.

"Love,

"Love, and Partaker of his Heavenly "Favours, and lived in an entire Friend- "ſhip and Communion with him." No certainly; Religion is the only Happineſs of a rational Creature, the only Thing that can give us any true and real Satiſfaction; all other Pleaſures are, at beſt, but ſhort and tranſitory; but in Religion we find a Delight and Satisfaction, which is ſolid, ſubſtantial, and laſting; a Delight that grows and improves under Thought and Reflection.

"Whenever (*to uſe the Words of another excellent Perſon*) "an Action is good "and virtuous, it is not only natural, but "carries with it a Felicity flowing from, "and eſſential to, the very Nature of it. "Paternal, conjugal, filial Affection; are "they not full of Delight? Juſtice, Friend- "ſhip, Beneficence, all the Offices of Hu- "manity, and the whole Train of Virtues; "does not the Exerciſe of them adminiſter "the moſt ſincere and laſting Joy? The "Propenſity there is in us towards them, "and the Satisfaction there is in the "doing of them, does, in Diſpoſitions "not

" not debauched, lead most irresistibly
" to the practice of them: We have, when
" we are about them, no boding, misgiving
" Thoughts, no forbidding Whispers,
" no secret Reluctancy: Comfort, Com-
" placency of Mind, and a gratulating
" Conscience, always accompany such Ac-
" tions."

What a perpetual Source of Joy and Comfort is a good Conscience! It gladdens the Heart, chears and refreshes the Soul, and fills the Mind with a constant Serenity and Chearfulness, which is infinitely to be preferred before the noisy Mirth of Fools and Madmen. He that is possessed of this inestimable Jewel, has a Treasure greater than all the Riches of the *Indies:* A Treasure, which he always carries about with him, and which neither the Malice of the Devil, nor the Wickedness of Men, can rob him of. And so long as he retains this Fund of Joy and Comfort (as he may always do, unless he is wretchedly wanting to himself), he can never be truly miserable. For a good Conscience, as it gives a Relish to all

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our outward Enjoyments, so it abates and takes off the Edge of the sharpest Affliction; and not only enables a Man to bear up under present Evils, but fortifies him against the Dread and Apprehension of future ones. It arms him with Courage and Resolution, and gives him such a Firmness and Presence of Mind, as makes him able to endure the greatest Shock. *Solomon* observes, that *the Wicked flee, when no Man pursueth; but the Righteous are bold as a Lion.* And the Holy *Psalmist* tells us, that a good Man *shall not be afraid of any evil Tidings: for his Heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord. The Lord,* says he, *is my Light and my Salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life; of whom shall I be afraid? Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff comfort me.* What indeed should *He* fear, whose Soul is anchored upon the Rock of Ages; *who has the God of Jacob for his Help; whose Hope is in the Lord his God?* He knows

Prov. xxviii. 1.

Ps. cxii. 7

Psalm xxvii. 1.

Ps. xxiii. 4.

Ps. cxlvi. 4.

knows that he is in the Hands of a most gracious and merciful Father, and is fully persuaded that *all Things shall work together for good to them that love him:* He is assured, that *the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope in his Mercy to deliver their Soul from Death, and to keep them alive in Famine.* And therefore he can rejoice in God, even in the midst of Trouble and Affliction, when he considers, that as his Afflictions come from the Hands of a good and gracious Being, who *does not willingly afflict the Children of Men*; so he knows that *as the Time is short*, they can be of no long Continuance, *and* that, if he makes a right Use of them, *they will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

Ps. xxxiii. 17, 18.

2 Cor. iv.

See then the Folly and Madness of those *that take not God for their Strength; but trust to the Multitude of their Riches, and strengthen themselves in their Wickedness*, and think by these Means to be fortified against the Evils of this Life!—Alas! There are numberless Calamities,

Ps. lii. 8.

from which Wealth and Power can never shelter us: and therefore if a Man withdraws his Trust in God, and takes Sanctuary in the Strength of his Wickedness, he will find himself miserably mistaken when the Day of Adversity comes upon him. The Weight of Sin superadded to that of temporal Evils, is a Burthen greater than any Person is able to bear. It is certain, whatever the Great-ones of this World may think, nothing can alleviate the Force of Worldly Troubles but a good Life. It is *That*, and *That* only, which is a sufficient Counterpoise to balance the Weight of any great Affliction: Nothing else is sufficient to support a Man in *the Evil Days of his Pilgrimage*, and to sustain his Spirit under the greater Calamities of this Life. All other Experiments, how promising soever, will be found vain and ineffectual. The Consciousness of having in some Measure lived holily and unblameably, will make him look up with a chearful Assurance to the great Supporter of his Being; enable him to see through the darkest Clouds of Sorrow and Afflic-

tion, and behold with an Eye of Faith that heavenly Country to which he is travelling, and where he hopes shortly to arrive. And this, though it will not wholly remove the Afflictions which God is sometimes pleased, for wise and good Ends, to send upon some Men in this Life, nor make us insensible of the Pangs that attend them; yet it will mightily lessen and enervate their force, and enable us to bear up under them with Courage and even Chearfulness. For, how strong a Consolation must it be for a good Man, under bodily Pains, or Grief of Mind, to contemplate a State where there shall be *no more Sorrow, no more Pain, and where all Tears shall be wiped* for ever *from his Eyes!* Or, if he is under the Pressure of Want and extreme Necessity, how must it support and relieve his sinking Spirits to consider, that he
Heb. xiii. has a father in Heaven, who *will never leave him, nor forsake him*, how *much* soever he may at present think fit to deprive him of outward Comforts! and that there is no Person in the World so great, so prosperous, or so happy, but that (having a little Patience) he himself shall be more so!

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The Sum of what I have ſaid upon this Head is ſo elegantly expreſſed by the Author of a late Eſſay upon the Omnipreſence of God, that, I believe, I ſhall leave this Reflection more ſtrongly upon my Reader's Mind, if I give him the Words of that unknown, but excellent, Perſon. 'How happy' (ſays he, ſpeaking of the Intercourſe there is betwixt God and the Souls of good Men), 'how happy is an intellectual Being, who, by Prayer and Meditation, by Virtue and good Works, opens this Communication between God and his own Soul! Though the whole Creation frowns upon him, and all Nature looks black about him, he has his Light and Support within him, that are able to cheer his Mind, and bear him up in the midſt of all thoſe Horrors which encompaſs him. He knows that his Helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any thing elſe can be which is capable of annoying or terrifying him: in the midſt of Calumny or Contempt, he attends to that Being, who whiſpers better Things within his Soul, and whom he looks

'upon as his Defender, his Glory, and *the* '*Lifter-up of his Head.* In his deepeſt 'Solitude and Retirement he knows, that 'he is in Company with the greateſt of 'Beings; and perceives within himſelf ſuch 'real Senſations of his Preſence, as are 'more delightful than any thing that can 'be met with in the Converſation of his '*Creatures.* Even in the Hour of Death 'he conſiders the Pains of his Diſſolution 'to be nothing elſe but the breaking-down 'of that Partition, which ſtands betwixt his 'Soul and the Sight of that Being, who is 'always preſent with him, and is about 'to manifeſt itſelf to him in Fulneſs of 'Joy.

'If we would be thus happy, (to go on with the Words of this pious Author)- 'and thus ſenſible of our Maker's Pre- 'ſence, from the ſecret Effects of his 'Mercy and Goodneſs; we muſt keep 'ſuch a Watch over all our Thoughts, 'that, in the Language of the Scripture, '*his Soul may have Pleaſure in us*; we 'muſt take care not to grieve his Holy 'Spirit, but endeavour to make the Me-

'ditations

'ditations of our Hearts always acceptable 'in his Sight, that he may delight thus to 'reſide and dwell in us. The Light of 'Nature could direct *Seneca* to this Doc-'trine, in a very remarkable Paſſage among 'his Epiſtles; *ſacer ineſt in nobis Spiritus, 'bonorum malorumque Cuſtos & Obſervator; '& quemadmodum nos illum tractamus, ita '& ille nos.* There is a Holy Spirit reſid-'ing in us, who watches and obſerves both 'good and evil Men, and will treat us after 'the ſame manner that we treat him. But 'I ſhall conclude' (ſays the ſame Au-thor) 'this Diſcourſe with thoſe more em-'phatical Words in Divine Revelation: *If 'any Man love me, he will keep my Word, and 'my Father will love him, and we will come 'unto him, and make our Abode with him.*'

I have thus far conſidered a good Life, *Firſt*, as it fills our Minds with Joy and Peace and Comfort, and de-livers us from thoſe uneaſy Reflections which haunt and torment the Sinner: And, *Secondly*, as it is a Means to ſecure us from thoſe Evils, which are the im-mediate Effects of Sin; and ſupports

us under ſuch Afflictions as it pleaſes God, many Times, to ſend upon good Men in this World. I ſhall now conſider it with reſpect to ſome other Advantages it hath above that of a wicked Courſe of Actions: and I hope it will fully appear, that there is nothing ſo likely to ſecure a Man's Happineſs in this World, as a ſtrict Obſervance of the Precepts and Duties of Religion.

St. *Peter* lays it down as an undoubted Truth, that whoſoever deſires to live happily, muſt live holily. *He that will love Life,* ſays he, *and ſee good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they ſpeak no Guile; let him eſchew Evil, and do Good.* And the Reaſon that temporal Proſperity is ſo likely to be the Lot and Portion of the Religious Man is, becauſe *the Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers; but the Face of the Lord is againſt them that do Evil.* It is very evident, from the whole Tenor of the Scriptures, that the Providence of God does very much intereſt itſelf in the Care and Support of good Men in this World. *O taſte and ſee,* ſays the holy *Pſalmiſt,*

Pet. iii. 10, 11.

Pet. iii. 4. xxiv. 5, 16.

Psalmist, *how gracious the Lord is! Blessed is the Man that trusteth in him. O fear ye the Lord, ye that are his Saints: for, they that fear him lack nothing. The Lions do lack, and suffer Hunger; but they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good.* How remarkable are the Words of the wise Son of *Sirach* to this Purpose! *Look at the Generations of old,* says he, *did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or did any abide in his Fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise that called upon him?* Add to this that Observation of Holy *David*: *I have been young, and now am old; yet saw I never the Righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their Bread.* On the contrary, *I have seen,* says he, *the Ungodly in great Power, and flourishing like a green Bay-tree: I went by, and, lo! he was gone; I sought him, but his Place could no where be found.* The Contemplation of God's watchful Providence over good Men made the devout *Psalmist* resolve and say, *I will always give Thanks unto the Lord; his Praise shall ever be in my Mouth.*

Ps. xxxiv. 8, 9, 10.

Eccles. ii. 10.

Ps. xxxvii. 25.

Ver. 36. 37.

Ps. xxxiv. 1.

It is certain, that God is a Being of infinite Purity and Holineſs: and as he muſt therefore hate Iniquity with the utmoſt Hatred; ſo there is no doubt, but a ſerious and conſcientious Obſervance of the Duties of Religion will recommend a Man to his Favour and Protection. He that *feeds the Fowls of the Air, clothes the Graſs of the Field*, and is of a Nature ſo diffuſively bountiful, *as to make his Sun to riſe on the Evil, as well as on the Good, and ſends his Rain both on the Juſt and Unjuſt*; will undoubtedly in a more peculiar manner bleſs the Labours of an honeſt and induſtrious man, and provide for thoſe that fear him and keep his commandments. I would not be underſtood to ſay, that never any wicked Man hath proſpered, nor any good Man been unſucceſsful in this World: for, it pleaſes God many Times, for wiſe and good Ends, to ſuffer the Righteous to fall into great Perplexities and Diſtreſſes. However, ſince
ſ. v. 13. the Scriptures aſſure us, that *the Lord will bleſs the Righteous, and compaſs him*
ſ. cxii. 3. *with Favour as with a Shield; that Wealth*

and

and Riches shall be in the House of him that fareth the Lord, and delighteth in his Commandments; that Blessings shall be upon his Head; that the House of the Righteous shall stand, and the Tabernacle of the Upright shall flourish; that it shall be well with them that fear God; and in short, that *Godliness has the Promise of the Life that now is*, as well as *of that which is to come*; I think we may certainly conclude, that a strict Observance of the Duties of the Christian Religion, is the most likely Way a Man can take to thrive and prosper in the World, and to make his Life comfortable and happy.

Ps. cxii. 1. Prov. x. 6. xii. 7. xiv. 11. Eccles. viii. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

And of this Truth we may be convinced, not only from the Testimony of Scripture, but from the Reason and Nature of Things. For, let any one consider and tell me, whether he who is just and true in all his Dealings, honest and sincere in all his Professions, and faithful to his Word and Promises; who is diligent and industrious in his Calling; who makes it his constant Rule to do to all men as he would they should do to him; and is so far from endeavouring to

over-reach and defraud his Neighbour, that he chooſes rather to forego the greateſt Gain, than purchaſe it at the Expence of the leaſt Injuſtice: I ſay, let any one tell me, whether it is not much more probable, that ſuch an one ſhould enlarge his Fortune in the World, than he that acts the very reverſe of all this; that practiſes all the Arts of Cheating and Lying, of Over-reaching and Circumvention, and ſtoops to every Thing, how baſe and diſhoneſt ſoever, which he thinks will turn to his preſent Profit; that conſiders not ſo much how honeſt and upright his Actions are, as how profitable; and cares not what his Neighour ſuffers by his Injuſtice, if he himſelf does but get by it. Such a man when he comes to be known (as he will not be able long to conceal himſelf), will certainly loſe his Credit and Reputation; he will become hated and deſpiſed, and every one will be afraid to have any Dealings with him. On the other hand, the honeſt and upright Man (beſides the Bleſſing of God, which he cannot fail of) will be ſure to meet with

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the Love and Esteem of all that know him: he will have few, if any, Enemies; but will have many Friends, and those some of the wisest and best of Men, who will be always ready to help and assist him, and be glad of every opportunity of promoting his Interest and Happiness.

2. Another great Blessing of Life, and what gives a Relish to all other Enjoyments, is *Health*. And who is more likely to obtain this Blessing than the Religious Man? for will not Temperance, Sobriety, and Virtue (Duties which he practises), conduce more to a sound and vigorous Constitution of Body, than Surfeiting and Drunkenness, Lust, and Intemperance; the mischievous Effects of which are too visible to be denied? *Who hath Woe?* (said *Solomon*) *who hath Sorrow? who hath Contentions? who hath Babling? who hath Wounds without Cause? who hath Redness of Eyes? They that tarry long at the Wine, they that go to seek mixed Wine.* What Sickness and Diseases have some Men brought upon themselves, merely by their Excesses and Debaucheries! Diseases, which have not terminated with their Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.

own Lives, but have been entailed upon their unhappy Posterity! And how can it be otherwise, unless it should please God to change the Nature of Things? for, if Men will run into those Excesses which inflame and corrupt their Blood; it is no Wonder that a Fever, or Dropsy, or some more fatal Distemper, should proceed from such Disorders. And when a vicious or debauched Parent has brought Rottenness into his own Bones; though the Children may be free from the Vices of their Father, yet they frequently feel all their Lives the mischievous Effects of his Transgressions.

3. Again: *a cheerful and contented Mind* is another great Blessing of Life; for, without it, nothing in this World can make us happy. And by what means shall a Man obtain this, but by the Practice of Religion? *That* will teach him to resign his Will to God, to submit to all the Dispensations of his Providence, and to be patient and easy, chearful and satisfied, under every Disappointment and Trouble he meets with; as knowing that God is the sovereign Disposer of all Things; a Being of infinite Goodness, Kindness, and Love;

that

that *He does not willingly afflict the Children of Men*, but makes *every Thing work together for good to them that love him*. And how quiet, easy, and contented, must such a Man be under all Events! He has learned, with St. *Paul*, *how to abound, and how to want*; and as he is not puffed up with the one, so neither is he cast down, when, it pleases God to send the other; but goes through the World with a chearful, even, and contented Mind, undisturbed by that Inquietude, Impatience, and Discontent, from which a proud, envious, and ambitious, Man is seldom, if ever, free.

4. *Peace* is another great Blessing, highly conducive to the Happiness of Life: and to this the religious Man has the justest Claim. He considers, that, *if God so loved us, as to send his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins, we ought also to love one another*; and therefore he is an Enemy to no Man, but kind and good-natured and obliging to all; and, if any one is so unreasonable as to reward him *Evil for Good*, (as the *Psalmist* complains some had done to himself) yet, in Imitation of his Blessed Saviour, whose Example

1 John iv 10, 11.

he continually sets before him, he does
Matt. v. 44. *Good to them that hate him, and prays for them that despitefully use him, and persecute*
1 Pet. ii. 25. *him. When he is reviled, he reviles not again; when he suffers, he threatens not, but committeth himself to him that judgeth righteously.* He resolves, as St. *Paul* ad-
Eph. iv. 31. vises, *to put away all Bitterness, and Wrath and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, with all Malice*; and endea-
Jam. iii. 17. vours to attain that *Wisdom* which is *from above*, which is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits.* And this Principle of Love, and Charity, and Good-will to Mankind, as it renders the Mind quiet and easy, calm and composed; so it makes a Man not only happy in himself, but a Blessing and Comfort to all about him; and consequently attracts the Love, and Esteem, and Admiration, of all those that see and feel the kind and
Ps. cxix. 165. benign Influences of so divine a Temper. *Great Peace*, says the *Psalmist, have they which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.* And the *Prophet* assures us,
Is. xxxii. 17. *That the Work of Righteousness shall be Peace*;

Peace; and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever.

But now, on the other hand, the Life of an angry and revengeful Man is all Storm and Tempest: he is *like a troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose Water cast up Mire and Dirt.* He is a Stranger to Peace, and all the blessed Fruits and Effects of it; for, where *Envying and Strife is, there is Confusion and every evil Work.* His Mind is continually restless and uneasy, agitated to and fro with the violent Force of unruly Passions, which lead him on from one Evil to another, and frequently hurry him into those that are of a very mischievous Consequence. What Misery and Torment must a Man feel, who is possessed with a Spirit so directly contrary to that of the Gospel! how little can he taste of the true happiness of Life, whose Mind is always discordant and out of Tune! He may perhaps *possess* a great deal of the World, but can *enjoy* very little of it: for, what Comfort can He find from any Thing in this World, who has no Peace in his own Mind; who is at Enmity with himself,

Is. lvii. 10.

James i 16.

himſelf, and with almoſt every one elſe, and is capable of being put out of Humour by every trifling, croſs Accident? Is it poſſible for a Man of ſuch a Temper to be happy, even in the midſt of the greateſt Proſperity? No, certainly: it is the meek-ſpirited, that our Saviour
att. v. hath pronounced *Bleſſed*; *they ſhall inherit the Earth, and be refreſhed*, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *in the Multitude of Peace*, and ſhall find a real Comfort in whatever they poſſeſs; which, though it ſhould happen to be but little, yet, being enjoyed in Peace and Quiet, and with a contented Mind, will undoubtedly yield them a much greater and truer Satisfaction, than a Man of a contrary Diſpoſition can reap from large Poſſeſſions and ample Revenues.

5. I ſhall mention but one Advantage more which a good Man has above a wicked one as to this World; and that is, in reſpect of *dutiful and obedient Children:* which is allowed by all to be a great Bleſſing in itſelf, and is what, I think, the former has much more Reaſon to expect and hope for, than the latter. For, if

if it pleases God to bless a good Man with Children, he begins very early to instill into their tender Minds the Principles of Virtue and Religion; he teaches them *to remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth*; and brings them up in the Fear and Admonition of the Lord. He sets before them, in his own Conduct, the Example of a holy and religious Life; and endeavours to wean them from the Pride and Vanity of the World, and from those hurtful Lusts and Passions, which tend only to make them miserable both here and hereafter. He instructs them in that Knowledge which is useful and profitable, which will give them a right Understanding of themselves and of their Duty, and make them wise unto Salvation: and, when the Grace of God co-operates with these Endeavours; (as it will not fail to do), what comfortable Hopes may not such a Parent entertain of reaping the happy Fruits of all his Labours! Instead of looking upon his Children with Grief and Trouble, and having his grey Hairs, by their Means, brought down with Sorrow to the Grave; how much rather

may

may he expect to behold them with Pleasure and Delight, when he sees them as so many *Olive-branches round about his Table*, fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledge and Love of God?

There is no Person, I believe, but will allow, that this is the most likely Way a Man can take to be happy in his Children: and though it should not prove effectual, (for, Success is not in our own Power); yet of this he may be assured, that his pious and sincere Endeavours to train up his Children in a sober, honest, and religious Course of Life, will certainly recommend him to the Favour and Love of God; as is manifest from the great Regard God expressed for *Abraham*, on this very Account. *And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that Thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty Nation, and all the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his Children and his Houshold after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment;*

Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 19.

ment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. This is a great Encouragement to Parents, to be very careful in the Education of their Children: they are making Provision for their own Happiness, at the same Time that they are endeavouring to secure that of their Children. And, should they be disappointed in these their pious Endeavours, they are laying up in Store a good Foundation of Comfort, to themselves at least, against the Day of Trouble; I mean, if it should please God, that they should live to see their Children wicked and miserable, notwithstanding all the Means they have used to make them otherwise. For, they will then have the Comfort to consider that they are clear from the Guilt of their Childrens' Sins; and will be free from those bitter Reflections that a wicked Man must make, who sees his Children ruined by those Vices and Follies which his Example hath taught them, or his Carelessness and Neglect suffered them to fall into. Bitter Reflections, I say, those must undoubtedly

doubtedly be, which ſuch a Parent will make, when he conſiders, that he has his Childrens' Sins, as well as his own, to account for; and applies to himſelf (as he juſtly may) thoſe dreadful Words which God ſpake to the Prophet *Ezekiel*:

Ezek. iii. *When I ſay unto the Wicked, thou ſhalt ſurely die, and thou giveſt him not Warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way, to ſave his Life; the ſame wicked Man ſhall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thy Hands.* O terrible Words of moſt juſt Judgment! How dreadful muſt they ſound in the Ears of a wicked Parent, whoſe Children have periſhed through his Fault!

I have now conſidered ſome of thoſe Duties to which Religion obliges us; and endeavoured to ſhew how conducive they are to our temporal Happineſs: by which, I hope, it ſufficiently appears, how much good Men have the Advantage of the Wicked even as to this World. And here I cannot but take Notice of the wonderful Love of God to Mankind, who, in order to encourage our Obedience to his Laws, has annexed a preſent,

ſent, as well as future, Reward to a good Life; and has ſo interwoven our Duty and Happineſs together, that, while we are diſcharging our Obligations to the one, we are, at the ſame Time, making the beſt Proviſion for the other.

How much then do they derogate from the Honour of God, who repreſent Religion as an unprofitable and unpleaſant Taſk! when it is plain to any Man, that conſiders Things rightly, and is it not under the Prejudice of his Luſts and Paſſions, that the great Deſign of Religion is to make us happy here, as well as hereafter. Accordingly, all its Rules and Precepts are ſo admirably ſuited to this End, that, would Men be perſuaded to live in the Practice of them, we ſhould find this World a kind of Heaven upon Earth.

But, had the Practice of our Duty been ever ſo irkſome and uneaſy, and had nothing but Trouble and Miſery been the Lot of good Men in this World; yet, when we conſider, that this Life will ſhortly have an end, and that there is an *eternal Weight of Glory* reſerved in Heaven for thoſe that truly love and ſerve God; what wiſe Man would

would not prefer the rugged Paths of Virtue and Religion, which he knows will shortly lead him into an Eternity of Bliss and Happiness, to the Ways of Sin and Wickedness, (how pleasant soever he might find them) where he is in Danger every Moment of falling into the Pit of Destruction, and which, he is sure, will, in a little Time, bring him into a Place of endless Misery and Torment?

But, since there is nothing in Religion but what tends to make our Lives easy, chearful, and contented; nothing but what is suitable to our Natures, and agreeable to the Dictates of right Reason; nothing but what will ennoble our Minds, enlarge our Understandings, and inspire us with a generous Principle of universal Love, and Charity, and Good-will, to Mankind; in short, since *the Commands of God are not grievous*, but his *Yoke is easy, and his burthen light*; it manifestly follows, that, as a good Life is the highest Wisdom, so a wicked one is the Extreme of Folly and Madness.

A PRAYER.

A PRAYER.

O MOST gracious God! who, out of thy great Love and tender Regard for Mankind, haſt ſet before us Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing; and haſt endued us with a Freedom of Will, and Liberty to chooſe the one, and avoid the other: and, to encourage us to make a right Choice, haſt annexed a preſent as well as future Reward to our Obedience to thy Laws, and made the Ways of Religion Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all its Paths to be Peace: O give me Wiſdom and Underſtanding, that I may not be carried away by the deceitful Pleaſures of this World; but may ſee, and know, and chooſe, the Things which make for my Peace, and wherein my true and only Happineſs doth conſiſt.

Convince me more and more, that Sin is the greateſt of all Evils; that Guilt and Miſery are always inſeparable; and that there

there is no other ſolid and ſubſtantial Happineſs to be attained in this Life, but that which reſults from the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and the Hopes of thy Favour and Acceptance: and grant that theſe momentous Truths may be ſo deeply impreſſed upon my Mind, that I may make it the ſincere Endeavour of my whole Life to pleaſe and obey Thee, who art my ſovereign Good and Happineſs; the only ſure Foundation of all my Hopes both here aud hereafter; and in Compariſon of whoſe Favour all the Honours, Riches, and Enjoyments, of this World, are as nothing.

Deliver me, I beſeech Thee, from the Shame and Anguiſh, the Horror and Confuſion of a guilty Conſcience; and give me that Comfort and Complacency of Mind, which ariſes from the Conſciouſneſs of having been faithful in thy Service, and obedient to thy Will. And, ſince thou haſt been graciouſly pleaſed to make thy Service the moſt perfect Freedom, and the Practice of our Duty ſo conducive to our preſent as well as future Well-being; O make me ſteadfaſt and immoveable in the Ways of thy

Laws

Laws, and in the Works of thy Commandments; that, having faithfully ſerved Thee in this Life, I may at laſt be found meet to be a Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, through the ſole Merits and Interceſſion of our Eternal Advocate and Mediator, Jeſus Chriſt. Amen!

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

CHAP. II.

IN the foregoing Chapter I have endeavoured to ſhew, that Religion is the only ſolid Foundation of Happineſs in this World; the only Thing that can make us paſs the Time of our Pilgrimage here on Earth with any tolerable Eaſe and Comfort. I ſhall now proceed, in the next Place, to conſider the great Advantage of a good Life, from the comfortable Proſpect it gives us when we cōme to die.

And

And this is an advantage peculiar to Virtue and Religion; and to which a Life of Sin and Wickedness never pretended. The most which *That* promises its Votaries, is to regale their Senses for a little while: it gives them no Hopes beyond the Grave; nor aims at any Thing further than a short-lived Happiness. *When a wicked Man dieth, his Expectation shall perish. For what is the Hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained* all that this World can give him, *when God taketh away his Soul?* All his Enjoyments are then at an End; and those Schemes, upon which he has built his Happiness, will vanish and come to nothing. But with a good Man it is far otherwise: He looks beyond this present Life, and beholds with an Eye of Faith the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the *City of the living God*; that Place of endless Bliss and Happiness, which God has prepared for them that love him. In the Hopes and Expectations of this Happiness, he considers himself *as a Pilgrim and Stranger upon Earth*, and is daily endeavouring, through the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, by a Life of Virtue and

Prov. xi. 7.

Job. xxvii. 8.

Righteousness, to become meet to be a Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.

It must indeed be owned, that Death is the great King of Terrors; that the Dissolution of Soul and Body, and the Thoughts of becoming a Prey to the devouring Worms, carries in it something very shocking to Human Nature; Yet to a good Man, Death appears in a quite different View. He considers, that to leave this World is only to quit a Place of Trouble and Vexation, of Vanity and Emptiness: it is to leave a *barren and dry Wilderness, where no Water is*, for the delightful Regions of Bliss and Happiness, where are Rivers of Pleasure, and a never-ceasing Spring of endless Comfort, which will satisfy the most longing Desires of the Soul. He considers, that *though this earthly Tabernacle is dissolved, yet he has a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*; and is assured with *Job, that his Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter Day upon the Earth; and that though his Body be destroyed, yet in* his *Flesh* he *shall see God, whom* he *shall see for* himself,

Job. xix. 25, 26, 27.

ſelf, *and* his *Eyes ſhall behold, and not another's.*

This is what Religion promiſes to them, *who, by patient Continuance in well-doing, ſeek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality.* It is the Hopes and Expectations of this unſpeakable Happineſs that fortify the Mind of a good Chriſtian, and give him a Courage and Reſolution, which even Death itſelf ſhall not be able to ſhake.

It was this that gave holy *David* ſuch a Firmneſs of Mind as made him ſay, *Though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff comfort me.* He had made God his Portion, his Hope, and his Truſt: *The Lord,* ſays he, *is my ſtony Rock, and my Defence, my Saviour, my God, and my Might, in whom I will truſt, my Buckler, the Horn alſo of my Salvation.* And though we find him ſometimes complaining, *that the Sorrows of Death had compaſſed him, and the Overflowings of Ungodlineſs made him afraid; that the Pains of Hell came about him, and the Snares of Death overtook him;*

Pſ. xxiii. 4.

—xviii. 1.

yet the great Confidence he had in the Goodneſs and Love of God, and the firm Belief of a better Life after this, overcame all his Fears. *I had fainted*, ſays he, *but that I verily believe to ſee the Goodneſs of the Lord in the Land of the Living.*

Pſalm xxvii. 15.

Religion has been the Support of good Men in all Ages. It is certain, whoever leans upon any Thing elſe will find that he truſts to a broken Reed, which will bend under him. There is nothing (as I have obſerved in the former Chapter) but the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and the Hopes of the Favour and Love of God, that is able to bear a Man up under the Weight and Preſſure of any great Calamity; much leſs will any Thing elſe be a ſufficient ſupport at the Hour of Death: for, *then* we ſhall be ſtript of all the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of this World, of all thoſe Things in which we are now apt to place ſo great a Confidence; and, unleſs we are fortified *with the Shield of Faith, and the Breaſt-plate of Righteouſneſs*; unleſs we have *put on the Lord Jeſus*, and are cloathed with the Robes of his Righteouſneſs,

ouſneſs, we ſhall be left naked and defenceleſs, to encounter Death with all its Terrors. The Sinner, how much ſoever he may now *truſt in the Multitude of his Riches*, and *ſtrengthen himſelf in his Wickedneſs*, muſt *then* give up all his Dependencies, and deſcend into the Regions of Darkneſs, not only without Hope, but (what is yet more terrible) with dreadful Expectations. Of what infinite Moment then is it to us alſo to live, that *when the Time appointed for our great Change ſhall come*, we may meet Death without Fear and Aſtoniſhment; and, with an humble Confidence, may look up to God, in an aſſured Hope of his Mercy in Chriſt Jeſus!

A good Life is indeed the ſure Pledge of a happy Death. As it fills our Minds with Joy and Satisfaction while we live, far ſurpaſſing all the Pleaſures of ſenſual Gratifications; ſo, when we come to die, it gives us that *Peace of God which paſſeth all Underſtanding*. When a Man in his laſt Hour can look back upon a Life well ſpent, and can ſay, with King *Hezekiah*, *Remember now, O Lord, I beſeech thee, how I have walked before thee in Truth* Iſaiah xxxviii.

and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which is good in thy Sight; what an unſpeakable Satisfaction muſt it be to him! How mild and calm will Death then appear! and with how little Concern will he receive its Summons! with what Chearfulneſs will he then take leave of this World, and all that was dear to him in it! And how contentedly will he quit his earthly Tabernacle when he conſiders, that he is to exchange it for a *Building of God, a Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens!* I ſay, what an unſpeakable Comfort muſt it be to a dying Man, when he is entering into the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, to have before him a bright Proſpect of Life and Glory; to find the Light of God's Countenance ſhining upon his Mind, and the Comforts of his Holy Spirit chearing and refreſhing his Soul; to be able to look up to God with a filial Confidence, and, with a *Hope full of Glory and Immortality*, to reſign his Soul into the Hands of his Maker; not doubting, but his heavenly Father, whom he has faithfully ſerved in this World, will take Care of him, and reward him in the next;

and

and that the ſame infinite Power and Goodneſs, which has carried him ſafe through this *Vale of Tears and Miſery*, will conduct him in his Paſſage to a bleſſed Eternity! O, how far more happy muſt the Death of ſuch an one be, than the moſt envied State of the greateſt Mortal! Who would not wiſh *to die the Death of the Righteous, and that his laſt End may be like his!* Eſpecially,

If we conſider, in the next place, the miſerable Condition of a wicked Man, when Death approaches. But how ſhall I deſcribe the Agonies and Convulſions of Mind, which a deſpairing Sinner labours under in his laſt Hour! Who can expreſs the thouſandth Part of the Anguiſh and Torment that *He* feels, who is under the Terrors of Death and Damnation! *The Spirit of a Man*, ſays *Solomon, will ſuſtain his Infirmity; but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* The moſt exquiſite Pains and Torments of the Body are nothing, compared with what a dying Sinner feels from the Stings of his guilty Conſcience. With what Shame and Confuſion does he then look back upon the Actions of

Prov. xviii. 14.

his paſt Life! how does he tremble and ſtand confounded, at the Remembrance of thoſe Sins which were once the darling Objects of his guilty Deſires! and what an horrible Dread overwhelms his Mind, when he conſiders that he is entering upon that unchangeable State, from which he knows there is no Redemption! that he is going to give an Account of a Life, which he cannot reflect upon without Horror and Amazement, and for which he is juſtly afraid he ſhall, in a few Moments, be conſigned to endleſs Miſery and Torments! How does he condemn himſelf, when his Conſcience reproaches him for having ſpent that Time inſignificantly and wickedly, which was given him for noble and excellent Purpoſes; that he has neglected the great and important Work of his Salvation, and been deaf to all the Calls and Invitations of God's Holy Spirit; that, inſtead of laying up in Store a good Foundation of Hope and Comfort againſt the Day of Trouble, which is now come upon him, he has heaped up to himſelf a dreadful Load of Guilt, which is ready to ſink him with its intolerable Weight!

O wretched

O wretched Man! what would'ſt thou give, were it in thy Power, to recall thoſe precious moments which thou haſt laviſhed away in Sin and Vanity! How doſt thou wiſh, that thou *badſt known* in Time *the Things that belong to thy Peace!* But, alas! *They are now hidden from thine Eyes*; and nothing is left but Darkneſs and Deſpair.

But let us ſuppoſe the Life of a dying Perſon not to have been ſo flagrant and vicious, as to fill his Mind with ſuch black and deſpairing Thoughts; yet, if, upon the Review of it in his laſt Hour, he finds in it ſuch a Mixture of Good and Evil, that he is in great Doubt and Uncertainty concerning his eternal Welfare; how ſad and diſconſolate muſt his Condition even *then* be! and what a dreadful Anxiety will he labour under when he conſiders, that he is leaving this World, and going he knows not whither; that he is juſt launching out into the boundleſs Ocean of Eternity; and that the next Moment he may ſink into the terrible Abyſs of endleſs Miſery and Torment! It is, without all Queſtion, a moſt diſtreſs-

full circumſtance to be doubtful of a Matter, of which it ſo nearly concerns us to have ſome highly probable Aſſurance.

O that Men would be perſuaded ſeriouſly to think on theſe Things! that they would *be wiſe, and conſider their latter End!* and, as the *Pſalmiſt* adviſes, would *keep Innocency, and take heed to the Thing that is right! for, that*, and that only, *ſhall bring a Man Peace at the laſt.* And who is there ſo ſtupid, that would not wiſh for ſo invaluable a Bleſſing? What wiſe Man would not rather ſubmit to the worſt that could befall him here in a *ſhort* Life, than run the leaſt Riſque of going out of this World under the Terrors of a guilty Conſcience? It is (whatever thoſe, who are carried away by their Luſts and Paſſions, may think, it is) the utmoſt Wiſdom of Man to prepare for his latter End, by conducting himſelf according to the Will of his great Creator: for, it is certain, (however ſome may vainly flatter themſelves), there is no leaving this World with any tolerable Compoſure, unleſs our Lives have been ſuch, as, through

Deut. xxxii. 29.

Pſ. xxxvii. 38.

the tender Mercies of God and the Merits of Christ Jesus, to give us a reasonable hope that we may be found in the Number of those whom our great Judge shall at the last Day pronounce *Blessed*. But this can only be the Lot and Portion of the Righteous; for, how can any one, whose Life has been a direct Contradiction to the Will of God, entertain Hopes of his Favour? Perhaps, when he sees Death approaching, he may lament and bewail the Folly of his past conduct, and *with strong Crying and Tears* resolve upon a new Course of Life, if it should please God to spare him; but, since the Gospel hath no where assured us, that God will accept of a Death-bed Repentance, or be reconciled to a Sinner, who (after having lived a wicked and careless Life, and been deaf to all the Calls and Invitations of the Holy Spirit, the Threatenings of the Gospel, and the Checks of his own Conscience) shall at the last, when he is able to gratify his Lusts no longer, and begins to fear the sad Consequences of his Sins, cry out for Mercy, and wish that he had been wise in Time: I say, since God has

no

no where revealed, that he will accept of any repentance which is not followed by a thorough Change and Amendment of Life, and a ſincere Obedience to his Commandments; and ſince it is impoſſible for a dying Sinner to bring forth ſuch Fruits of Repentance; how precarious muſt *his* Hopes be, that are built upon ſo uncertain a Foundation!

'Tis true, to repent is all that a Man who has led a wicked Life can do, when he comes to die; and it would be well, for his own Sake, and for the Sake of his ſorrowful Friends and Relations, that he would do this much, and not go out of the World hardened and inſenſible: for, who knows how far infinite Mercy may be extended? But, ſurely, it muſt be the greateſt Inſtance of Folly and Madneſs, to hazard a Matter of ſuch infinite Moment upon ſo uncertain an Iſſue; upon a few broken, confuſed, and almoſt deſpairing Sighs and Groans: for, if the Remorſe and Horrors, the ſolemn Vows and Reſolutions of ſuch Men ſhould not prove a true godly Sorrow, *a Repentance to Salvation*

not

not to be repented of (as no Man can say they certainly will), they are lost and undone to all Eternity.

But suppose we could be assured, that a Death-bed Repentance would be effectual; yet who can tell, whether a Man may have Time for that Work in the Hour of Death? Or, if he could be certain that a lingering Sickness would put an End to his Days; yet how does he know that God will then vouchsafe him the Grace of Repentance? and without that Grace it is impossible he should repent. O how much rather may such an one fear, lest God should be so provoked, by his many wilful Refusals to hearken to the Calls and Admonitions of the Holy Spirit, as to cut short his Day of Grace, and deliver him over to a hardened and reprobate Mind!

The Scripture assures us, that there is a Time when Men shall call upon God, and he will not hearken. *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof; I also will laugh at* Prov. i. 24, &c.

your

your Calamity: I will mock when your Fear cometh; when your Fear cometh as Desolation; and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated Knowledge, and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord: they would none of my Counsel. They despised all my Reproof; therefore shall they eat of the Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with their own Devices. The End of the Long-suffering and Forbearance of God is *to lead Men to Repentance:* but if, instead of producing that blessed Effect, it only hardens them in their Sins, and makes them resolve to go on in their wicked Courses, vainly presuming they shall repent, when they come to die; how just may it be in God to leave them at their last Hour under all the Terrors and Agonies of a fearful Death! *to laugh at their Calamity, and to mock when their Fear cometh!*

Rom. ii. 4.

O consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. Consider it in due Time, before

fore it be too late, before the dreadful Hour comes upon you, when all Opportunities of reconciling yourſelves to your offended God ſhall be taken from you, and the Door of hope ſhall be for ever ſhut. Silence the Clamour of your paſſions, and liſten to the Threatenings of God's Holy Word, the Admonitions of his Bleſſed Spirit, and the Checks of your own Conſciences. Be perſuaded to ſet about the great Work of your Salvation *To-day, while it is called To-day, before the Night cometh when no Man can work.* Remember, that though you are now, perhaps, in Health and Strength; in the Prime and Vigour of your Years; ſurrounded with the Pleaſures of a great and ſplendid Fortune; yet the Time is coming, and (whether you think of it or not) will haſten on apace, when you muſt take your Leave of all that is deſirable upon Earth. And nothing will then ſtand you in any Stead but a good Conſcience; neither Honours, nor Riches, nor any Thing elſe that Men are now ſo fond of, will then be able to give you one Moment's Eaſe, or afford you one comfortable

Thought.

Thought. Nothing will be *then* regarded but the Consciousness of having in some Measure answered the End for which God sent you into the World; by having lived in the Fear and Love of God, *and in Simplicity and godly Sincerity having had your Conversation in this World.*

Tim. iv. 8. It was this that made St. *Paul* desire *to be dissolved, and to be with Christ:* for he had *fought a good Fight and kept the Faith.* And therefore he could say with great Assurance, when *The Time of his Departure was at Hand, that there was laid up for him a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, should give him at that Day.* And it was this that made a late pious * Divine of our Church, when he was near his Death, utter these remarkable Expressions: 'I am entering upon 'my last Labour; the Lord gave, and he 'is now taking away, blessed be the Name 'of the Lord! for, I thank my God, I am 'going without any Distrust, without the 'least Mis-giving, to a Place of Rest, and

* *Mr.* Kettlewell. *See the Preface to his Five Discourses published since his Death.*

'Joy,

'Joy, and everlasting Bliss. There is no 'Life like a happy Death. I have endeavoured, even from my Youth, to approve myself a faithful Servant to my 'great Master. I have taken some Pains 'in writing several Books; I have seriously considered them; and am fully satisfied (looking on those about him), that 'you may find in them the Way to 'Heaven. The Christian Duties contained therein have been my Practice, as 'well as Study: and now I find the Advantage of it. And therefore be careful 'to read them often and seriously; and live 'suitable thereunto, that, when you come 'to the Condition I am now in, you may 'die with Comfort, as you see me do. I 'have some little Pain indeed; but my 'Pain is nothing so extraordinary as my 'Hopes; for I have earnestly repented of 'all my Sins, and verily believe, that, 'through the tender Mercies of my God, 'and the Merits of my Blessed Saviour '*Jesus Christ*, I shall be carried up into '*Abraham's* Bosom.' After which, it is said, he made this short Prayer. 'I wait,

'O God,

'O God, for that Everlasting Rest, which 'I want at present, but shall not long. I 'I am ready, when thou my God callest for 'me; yet can stay with Patience till thou 'pleasest: for thy Time is the best Time, 'and thy Pleasure the best Pleasure.'

See here the End of a good Man. How calm, how serene and comfortable is his Death! Is there any Thing like this, in the Case of a wicked Man, in the Hour of his Dissolution? Alas! no. If you behold such a person in his last Extremity (unless he die hardened and impenitent), you will hear little else but bitter Reflections, sad Bewailings, wretched Upbraidings of himself, for the Folly and Madness of his past Life; together with despairing Sighs and Groans, black and dreadful to himself, and very terrible to all about him. May God, of his infinite Mercy, keep every one from such a dreadful Hour! *and teach us all so to number our Days, as to apply our Hearts unto Wisdom*; that *true* Wisdom, which will make us wise unto Salvation, fill our Minds with Comfort and Satisfaction, while we live, and, what is of infinitely

finitely more Value, give us, when we come to die, *that Peace of God which passeth all Understanding*, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. Amen!

A PRAYER.

O Most great and mighty God! in whose Hands are the Issues of Life and Death! Thou ordereſt all Things by thy infinite Power and Wiſdom, and haſt appointed for all Men once to die; and, after this ſhort Life is ended, haſt, of thy infinite Goodneſs, provided for thy faithful Servants a State of endleſs Bliſs and Happineſs. O make me truly ſenſible of the Frailty and Uncertainty of my Life; and teach me ſo to number my Days, that I may apply my Heart unto true Wiſdom. Let not Death ever ſurprize me unawares, or find me in a State unprovided. But grant that I may live in ſuch a conſtant Preparation for my latter End, that, how ſuddenly

ſuddenly ſoever thou ſhalt be pleaſed to take me out of this World, I may be found ready and prepared for that great Account, which I muſt one Day give before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt. Enable me, by the Aſſiſtance of thy Grace and Holy Spirit, to finſh the great Work of my Salvation before the Night comes, when no Man can work, and to lay up a good Foundation of Hope and Comfort againſt the Hour of my Death; that, when the Time of my Departure ſhall come, I may look back upon a well-ſpent Life with Joy and Comfort, and may meet Death without Fear.

Look upon me, O moſt gracious God, when the Time of my Diſſolution draws nigh, as a reconciled Father in Chriſt Jeſus. Speak Peace unto my Conſcience, and ſay unto my Soul, 'I am the God of thy Sal-'vation.' Let not the cruel Enemy of Souls affrighten me with his Terrors; but give thy holy Angels charge over me, to keep me out of his Hands, and let the Comforts of thy Holy Spirit chear and refreſh my Soul in its Paſſage through this Vale of Tears and Miſery to a happy Eternity.

O Lord!

O Lord! leave me not to myſelf in that Time of Diſtreſs, when I ſhall ſtand in ſo much need of thee. Confirm my Faith; ſupport me in my dying Agonies; and forſake me not, when my Strength faileth. Let thy merciful Ears, O God, be then open to my Prayers; and ſpare me, O Lord moſt holy, O God moſt mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou moſt worthy Judge eternal! ſuffer me not at my laſt Hour, through any Pains of Body, or Weakneſs of Mind, to renounce my Dependence upon thee. But grant, O merciful Father, that, with an humble Reliance on thy Mercies, and the infinite Merits of my dear Redeemer, and with an entire Submiſſion to thy bleſſed Will, I may chearfully reſign up my Soul into thy Hands, and may be willing and even deſirous to leave this Word, when thou, my God, in thy great Wiſdom, ſhalt ſee it fitting.

O Lord! let me never be ſeparated from thee; but grant that my Soul may be ſo united to thee, who art the Fulneſs of all Happineſs, by the ſtrongeſt Ties of Faith,

Faith, Love, and Obedience, that, after a Life ſpent here in thy Service, I may dwell with thee in Life everlaſting, and be received into thoſe Manſions of Eternal Bliſs and Glory, which thou haſt prepared for them that truly love and fear thee; through the Merits, and for the ſake, of thy beloved Son, Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord and only Saviour. Amen!

THE

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

CHAP. III.

HITHERTO I have considered the great Advantages of Religion, as they respect only our Well-being in this World, and our going comfortably out of it. But, as there are other Advantages attending a good Life, infinitely beyond all that have been mentioned; namely, that it will entitle us, through the Merits of *Christ Jesus, to an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*; I shall endeavour to shew, in the

laſt Place, that a ſerious and conſcientious Obſervance of the Duties of Religion, will moſt certainly be rewarded with eternal Happineſs in the Life to come.

And here I ſhall not preſume ſo much as to aim at a Deſcription *of that exceeding Weight of Glory*, which God has reſerved for thoſe that truly love him. In the Scripture, indeed, the Glories of the other World are repreſented to us, in Condeſcenſion to our weak Capacities, as a *Kingdom, and a Crown; an eternal Kingdom, and a never-fading Crown*; But the State of the other World is a State ſo unknown to us, and ſo much above our imperfect Conceptions, that we ſhall never be able fully to comprehend it, till we arrive at the actual Enjoyment of it. For, though we know that we ſhall there ſee God, and the Bleſſed Jeſus, who *loved us and gave himſelf for us*, and ſhall to all Eternity enjoy *Him* who is the Source and Fountain of all Good; that we ſhall there converſe with Saints and Angels, and for ever be ſinging Anthems of Praiſe to our great Creator and Redeemer; yet

yet how great the Pleasure of this will be, and with what Extasies and Raptures our Souls shall then break forth, when they taste of the *Fulness of that Joy which is in the Presence of God for evermore*; is what our finite Understandings cannot possibly reach. Of this we may rest assured, that the Things which God hath reserved for them that love him, are such *as neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive.* And as this is sufficient for us at present to know in general, concerning this Matter; all curious Inquiries into the precise Nature of the Happiness of the next Life, will be of small Use to us: They may fill our Heads with fine Speculations, but will signify little to direct our Practice. What we are more concerned to know, and in the most explicit manner is, that our sincere Obedience to God's Commandments will certainly be rewarded with eternal Life and Happiness. This, indeed, is a Matter which it imports us to be well assured of; that we may not be weary of Well-doing, but *may run with Patience the Race that is set* Heb. xii. 1.

Phil. iii. 14. *before us, and press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

There are some indeed (and a melancholy Reflection it is that there are any such) who would have us believe, that we die like the Beasts which perish, and that when we leave this World there is an End of us. But these, upon Inquiry, I believe, will be always found to be Persons who first live as if there was no God, and then endeavour to persuade themselves and others, that there really is none; so that, instead of regulating their Practice by their Faith, they do most preposterously suit their Faith to their Practice. I shall not concern myself at present with these Men; my Design being chiefly for the Sake of those, who believe the Christian Religion, and the Revelation of God's Will in the Holy Scriptures. And surely to such it can be no Doubt, but that in those sacred Writings *we have eternal Life*; and that the Performance of God's Commandments, is the certain and indispensable Condition of obtaining it.

It

It is true, natural Religion will teach us, not only that *God is, but that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him:* But it hath pleased God, of his great Goodness, not to leave us to the Light of Nature alone, to discover this weighty Truth. The Rewards of another Life are so fully and clearly revealed in the Writings of our Saviour and his Apostles; and the Way to obtain them is there so plainly laid down, that there is no Room for any Doubt, or Uncertainty concerning that Matter. Whatever dark, or imperfect, Notions the *Jews*, as well as *Gentiles*, had of a future State, it is certain, *that Life and Immortality is now brought to Light by the Gospel:* and we may rest assured, that though, when we die, our Bodies shall be laid in the cold Chambers of the Grave, and there become the Food of Worms, and moulder into Dust and Rottenness; yet it will not be long *ere this corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this mortal shall put on Immortality. For, God hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath* 1 Cor. xv. 53. Acts xvii. 31.

given Assurance unto all Men, in that he h
2 Cor. v. 10. *raised him from the Dead:* A Day *whe*
we must all appear before the Judgment-
of Christ, that every one may receive
Things done in his Body, according to that
John v. 28, 29. *hath done, whether it be good or bad.*
then all that are in their Graves shall h
his Voice, and shall come forth: they that h
done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life:
they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrec
of Damnation.

He then who believes the Gospel every one must, that lives under the fluence of it, unless he be wretchedly bli ed by his Lusts and Passions) can ne doubt of these two great Articles of Christian Religion; *the Resurrection of Body, and the Life everlasting.* The P sibility of the former hath been made dent, by the Resurrection of Jesus Ch from the Dead; and the certainty of latter appears, from the express Dec rations of God in the Holy Scriptu Indeed, the whole Tenor of the Cl stian Religion sufficiently proves it; ev Precept of which tends to purify and fine our Natures, and to fit and prepare

for the Society of Saints and Angels in another Life. The *Apostle* assures us, that *God hath not appointed us to Wrath, but to obtain Salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that we should live together with him.* And St. John tells us, that *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the End that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

1 Thes. v 9, 10.

John iii. 16.

If then we believe that God is infinitely just and true, we can never doubt, that at the great Day of Retribution, *he will render to every Man according to his Deeds. To them who, by patient Continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality*; He (who is *Truth* itself, and cannot *deceive*) hath promised *eternal Life: but to them who are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrightcousness*; He hath declared that he will pour forth *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.*

Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Our Saviour, in his Exposition of the Parable of the *Tares*, tells us that *at the End of the World, the Son of Man shall send*

Matt. xiii. 40, 41, 42.

send forth his Angels; and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all Things that offend, and them which do Iniquity, and shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. And so in his Exposition of the Parable of the *Net*, in the same
Ver. 49. 50. Chapter, he says, that at *the End of the World, the Angels shall come forth and sever the Wicked from among the Just, and shall cast them into the Furnace of Fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth.* Thus again,
Matt. xxv. 31, 32. 33, 34. we are told by our Saviour, that *when the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory, and before him shall be gathered all Nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats: and he shall set the Sheep on his Right Hand, but the Goats on the Left. Then shall he say unto them on his Right-hand; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared*
Ver. 41. *for you from the Beginning of the World: But to them on the Left-hand; Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. And these shall*

go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal. Ver. 46.

This, as it is a plain and lively Description of the awful Solemnity of that great and tremendous Day, *when the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father, with his Angels, to judge the Quick and the Dead*; so it is sufficient to convince us, that, though *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, yet that every one who believes the Gospel, and sincerely obeys the Precepts of it, shall assuredly *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* This was the very Purchase of Christ's Blood, and the End for which he was contented to be given up into the Hands of cruel Men, to be buffeted, spit upon, and evil-entreated, and at last to suffer a cruel and ignominious Death upon the Cross. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and become the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his Poverty might be made rich. He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities; the Chastisement of* Matt xvi. 27. Heb. xii. 14. 2Cor. viii.

our Peace was upon him, and with his Stripes we are healed.

The Redemption of Mankind was thought a Design worthy the Son of God. The Souls of Men were of so great a value in His Sight, that he esteemed nothing too much, or too great, to suffer for their Sakes. He saw and pitied our Misery, and knew that without a Saviour we must be lost for ever; and therefore condescended so far as to humble himself even to the Death upon the Cross, for us miserable Sinners, who lay in Darkness and the Shadow of Death, that he might make us the Children of God, and exalt us to everlasting Life: So that
Ephes. ii. 13, 19. though we *were sometimes afar off*, yet being *now made nigh by the Blood of Christ, we are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Houshold of God.* And, if we are careful
2 Tim. iv. 8. to perform our Parts, we may assuredly say with St. Paul, that *henceforth there is laid up for us a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give us at that Day.* For we have the Promise of Him

Him who is *Truth* itself and cannot deceive us, that, if we are *faithful unto Death*, He *will give us a Crown of Life.* Revel. ii. 10.

And what a glorious Incitement is this to all Men, *to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present World!* What can we desire more to make us *stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, than to know *that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord?* that no good Action which we do, shall be lost and fruitless; but that, in a little Time, all our Services will be infinitely rewarded? that every Grace and Virtue which we exercise in this Life, and every Degree of them, *shall receive their just Recompence at the Resurrection of the Just?* and that, if we serve God faithfully and sincerely, we may be assured, that, through the tender Mercies of our heavenly Father, and the Merits of our Redeemer, we shall be received into a Place of everlasting Rest and Peace; where we shall adore and praise the Author of our Salvation, and contemplate the glorious Perfections of his Majesty, with a joy and Satisfaction infinitely exceeding 1 Cor. xv. 58.

ceeding all that we can now possibly conceive?

'O blessed Time!' (to use the Words of Archbishop *Tillotson*) 'when Mortality shall 'be swallowed up of Life, and Death and 'Sorrow shall be no more! when we shall 'be eased of all our Pains, and resolved of 'all our Doubts, and be purged from all 'our Sins, and be freed from all our Fears, 'and be happy beyond our Hopes, and 'have all this Happiness secured to us be-'yond the Power of Time and Change!'

Col. i. 12. 13. As the Consideration of these Things cannot but at present fill our Hearts *with Joy unspeakable*, and excite us continually *to give Thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; who hath delivered us from the Power of Darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son:* So, when we come to have a nearer and more immediate View of the Glories of that Kingdom which God hath prepared for us; how will our Souls break forth into Extasies of Love and Joy! how will it transport us to see him, whom we

we have loved aud faithfully served! to see him, not arraigned for a Malefactor, not hanging in a shameful Manner upon the Cross! but to see him, in all his Majesty and Glory, sitting in a triumphant Manner upon his Throne, adored by Angels and Arch-angels, *thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him!* to see him, I say, not as an angry and incensed Judge, but as a merciful Saviour and Redeemer, looking upon his faithful and beloved Servants with the tenderest Affection, and receiving them into the Arms of his everlasting Mercy, with those ravishing Words, *Come, ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World!*

Dan. vii. 10.

But then, on the other hand, with what Anguish and Despair will the Wicked and Ungodly behold the dreadful Solemnities of that awful Day! how will they tremble and be confounded, when the *Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?* When they

2 Thess. 7, 8.

2 Pet. iii. 10. they shall see the *Heavens passing away with a great Noise, and the Elements melting with fervent Heat; the Earth also, and the Works that are therein, burnt up!* when they shall behold the Jaws of Hell open to receive them, and the great Judge of the World, with Terror in his Looks, ready to pronounce that dreadful Sentence, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels!*

Oh! what Confusion and Agonies will those Souls be in, to whom those dreadful Words shall then be spoken! How will Rev. vi. 16. they *call upon the Mountains and Rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb!*—But, alas! what will that avail them, when *the great Day of his Wrath is come!* Whither —xx. 11. shall they betake themselves, when *both the Earth and the Heavns shall flee from the Presence of the Judge!* If the Saviour of the World condemns them, who shall intercede in their Behalf? If He, that once died to purchase their Salvation, will not save them (as it is certain he will not save the

the Wicked and Impenitent), to whom shall they fly for Succour! It will then be too late to cry for Mercy, when the Time of Judgement is come; too late to lament their Folly and Madness, when the Time of Working is over: All Prayers and Entreaties, all Tears and Repentance, will then be in vain. *He that is unjust* must be *unjust still*; *and he that is filthy* must be *filthy still*. *As the Tree is fallen, so it must lie* for ever. The Time of Trial, the Day of Grace, is ended, *and there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin*; but a *firey Indignation* must *devour them*. The dreadful Hour is come, when they must be banished for ever from the Enjoyment of Him, *in whose Presence* alone is *Fulness of Joy*; and be doomed to those Lakes of Fire and Brimstone, *where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*; where they must be bound in everlasting Chains, and be *Day and Night for ever and ever tormented* by the Devil and his accursed Spirits (those cruel and unrelenting Beings) in the Flames of a most outrageous and never-to-be extinguished Fire.

Rev. xxi 11.

Heb. x. 26, 27.

Rev. xx. 10.

Could

'Could I represent to you' (says Archbishop *Tillotson*, in one of his excellent Sermons) 'the Horror of that dismal 'Prison, into which wicked and impure 'Souls are to be thrust, and the Misery 'they must there endure, without the 'least Spark of Comfort, or Glimmering 'of Hope; how they wail and groan 'under the intolerable Wrath of God, 'the insolent Scorn and Cruelty of De-'vils, the severe Lashes and Stings, the 'raging Anguish and horrible Despair of 'their own Minds, without Intermission, 'without Pity, and without Hope of 'ever seeing an End of that Misery, 'which yet is unsupportable for one Mo-'ment: Could I represent these Things 'to you according to the Terror of them; 'what Effect must they have upon us! 'with what Patience could any Man bear 'to think of plunging himself into this 'Misery; and by his own wilful Fault and 'Follies endanger his coming into this 'Place and State of Torments!'

Oh! who, indeed, can think of these Things without resolving, in good earnest, to flee from the Wrath to come, and to

secure

ſecure a happy Eternity, by a Life of Virtue and Righteouſneſs! who, that believes *the Wicked ſhall be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God*; that conſiders what it is to dwell in the moſt exquiſite Miſery and Torments to all Eternity; who, I ſay, that conſiders theſe Truths, will not immediately reſolve *to have no Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs*, but give himſelf up entirely to the Service and Obedience of the bleſſed Jeſus, with unfeigned Reſolutions of *living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World!* In a word, who that is truly wiſe, and conſiders that Time itſelf is ſhort, and that the Time of Man is much ſhorter; that Eternity has neither End nor Change; and that every Man is haſtening to an eternal and invariable State, and will in a little Time be ſummoned to appear before the awful Tribunal of God; there to give an Account of his Actions; and, according as he has behaved himſelf in this Life, be then conſigned to a Place of endleſs Happineſs or Miſery;—who, I ſay, that reflects upon theſe great and important Truths, with that Serioufneſs

and

and Concern which they deſerve, would ever reſign his Integrity and part with that invaluable Prize, *a good Conſcience*, for the greateſt Happineſs this World could promiſe him! How is it poſſible that a Man, who will give himſelf Time to conſider what it is to be under the eternal Diſpleaſure of Almighty God, ſhould do any Thing wilfully and deliberately, which he knows will provoke his Anger! What wiſe Man would not rather ſubmit to the worſt that could befall him here in a *ſhort* Life, than run the leaſt Riſque of offending Him on whom his Welfare and Happineſs muſt depend hereafter, as well as at preſent, not only in this Life, but through all Eternity; eſpecially when he conſiders what Obligations he is under to approve himſelf a faithful Servant of his great Maſter, and to direct and govern his whole Conduct by the Will of his Creator; when he reflects upon the infinite Love of God manifeſted in all the Works of his Creation and Providence, but eſpecially in that ſtupendous Myſtery of our Redemption; when he thinks *upon the Breadth and Length*,

Length, the Hight and Depth, of that Love of God, which moved him to send his only-begotten Son into the World, *to be the Propitiation for our Sins*, and to suffer a cruel and ignominious Death upon the Cross, *that we might not perish, but have everlasting Life!* Oh! how is it possible but such an one must be filled with so grateful a Sense of what God has done for him, as to endeavour, all that in him lies, to act suitably to the infinite Love of so merciful a Father, so kind and loving a Saviour!—Surely the Love of God must constrain us—But, if there be any one so stupid and insensible, as not to be wrought upon by such powerful Motives, let him reflect upon *the Terrors of the Lord*, and ask himself seriously this important Question, Whether he is able to *dwell with everlasting Burnings?* Let him think upon that terrible Day of the Lord, which, whether he thinks of it or not, will most assuredly come, *when all that are in their Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth; they that have done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation;* John v. 28, 29.

when

when the Kings of the Earth, and the great Men, and the rich Men, shall hide themselves in the Dens and in the Rocks of the Mountains; and shall say to the Mountains and Rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the Face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb. Let him revolve in his Thoughts the miserable condition of those wretched Souls, that are now shut up in the Regions of everlasting Darkness, amongst an accursed Company of infernal Spirits; and then tell me, whether he thinks the short and momentary Pleasures of a wicked Life, will compensate for endless Misery and Torments.

There is no one, I believe, who thinks at all, but must think otherwise. But the great Misfortune is, that many men are so inflamed by their Lusts and Passions, that they are seldom cool enough for sober Reflections. Yet, if they would be persuaded frequently to meditate upon Death and Judgment; if they would represent to their Minds what a vast Disproportion there is betwixt Time and Eternity, and consider that the Pleasures of Sin, at best,

are

are but for a Season, whereas its Punishment is endless and intolerable; I say, could Men be brought to think of these Things with any Seriousness, I doubt not but such Thoughts would in Time have their proper Effect, and would so thoroughly convince them of the great Folly and Danger of Sin, as to make them in good Earnest set about the great Work of their Salvation.

'* The Judgment to come is a very 'amazing Consideration: it is a fearful 'Thing to hear of it; but it will be much 'more terrible to see it, especially to those 'whose Guilt must needs make them so 'heartily concerned in the dismal Consequences of it: and yet, as sure as I stand 'and you sit here, *this great and terrible 'Day of the Lord will come*; and *who may 'abide his coming!* What shall we do when 'that Day shall surprize us careless and 'unprepared! What unspeakable Horror 'and Amazement will then take hold of 'us, when, *lifting up our Eyes to Heaven, 'we shall see the Son of Man coming in 'the Clouds with Power and great Glory!*

* Abp. *Tillotson's* Sermons, Vol. II. p. 412.

'when

'when that powerful Voice, which ſhall 'pierce the Ears of the Dead, ſhall ring 'through the World, *Ariſe, ye Dead, and 'come to Judgment!* when the mighty 'Trumpet ſhall ſound, and waken the 'Sleepers of a thouſand Years, and ſum-'mon the diſperſed Parts of the Bodies 'of all Men, that ever lived, to rally 'together and take their Places! and 'the Souls and Bodies of Men, which have 'been ſo long Strangers to one another, 'ſhall meet, and be united again, to re-'ceive the Doom due to their Deeds! 'what Fear ſhall then ſurprize Sinners! 'and how will they tremble at the Pre-'ſence of the great Judge, and for the 'Glory of his Majeſty! how will their 'Conſciences fly in their Faces, and their 'own Hearts condemn them for their 'wicked and ungodly Lives, and even 'prevent that Sentence, which yet ſhall 'certainly be paſſed and executed upon 'them!'

Oh! let me then intreat every one, with all the Earneſtneſs that a Matter of ſuch vaſt Importance requires, frequently and ſeriouſly to think upon the tremendous

Day

Day of Judgment, and the great Account they must then give; to consider with themselves how their Accounts stand with respect to another Life; and what a dreadful Condition they will be in, if they should be called to appear at the *Judgment-seat of Christ*, before they have made their Peace with God, and secured an interest in the Merits and Intercession of their great Judge. But especially let me persuade those, who, in Pursuit of their unlawful Pleasures, have plunged themselves in Sensuality and Wickedness, to stand still a Moment, and consider whither they are going. Let me beg of them, as they have any Regard for their present Peace and Happiness, or any Value for their precious Souls; as they would not leave this World under the Terrors and Agonies of a guilty Conscience, nor appear at the last Day, in the Presence of God, of Angels, and of Men, under all the Circumstances of Horror, Shame, and Confusion; and, lastly, as they would not then be banished from the Presence of God for ever, and be cast into the bottomless Pit of Destruction, to be

be there tormented without Measure, and without End; let me, I say, prevail upon them not to delay their Repentance one Moment, but immediately forsake their evil Ways, and *turn unto the Lord their God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness*; and who has assured us, by his Prophet, that *when the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive.*

Joel ii. 3.

Ezek. i. xviii. 27.

As for those happy Christians, who have entered upon a good Life, and are engaged in the Practice of Virtue and Religion; who make the Glory of God, and the Salvation of their own Souls, and the Souls of others, their great Care and Concern; I need only exhort them to go on in their Christian Course with Courage and Resolution; *to hold fast their Profession*, and with an unwearied Diligence *to press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*; nothing doubting, but *that he that hath begun a good Work in them, will perform it untill the Day of Jesus Christ.* God is faithful, that

Heb. iv. 14.

Phil. iii. 14.

Phi. i. 6.

that has promised; and therefore they may rest assured, that he will remember and reward *their Work of Faith and Labour of* 1 Thes. i. 3.
Love, and Patience of Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that in due Season they shall Gal. vi. 9.
reap, if they faint not. Yet a little while, Heb. x. 37.
and he that shall come will come; and his Reward is with him, to give to every Man Rev. xxii. 12.
according as his Work shall be: To him that Rev. iii. 21.
overcometh, he will grant to sit with him in his Throne; even as he also overcame, and is sat down with his Father in his Throne.

O happy, happy Time! for those blessed Souls *who have fought the good Fight, and kept the Faith.* All their Labours will then be at an End: that *Crown of Life,* which Rev. ii. 10.
God hath promised to his faithful Servants, will then be bestowed upon them; and they shall be admitted to *an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not* 1 Pet. i. 4.
away. They shall then be received into a Place of endless Bliss and Joy, *where there* Rev. xxi. 4.
shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying; neither shall there be any more Pain; but all Tears shall be wiped from their Eyes; and they shall for ever enjoy the most per-

fect and consummate Happiness, and sing eternal *Allelujahs of Praise and Thanksgiving unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* Amen.

The Conclusion.

IF a good Life be attended with so many Advantages as, I hope, I have shewn it is; if it will make us live happily, die comfortably, and at last intitle us, through the Merits of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, to an eternal Inheritance in that Kingdom which he has purchased for us with his most precious Blood; and if, on the other hand, Guilt be its own Punishment in this World, and everlasting Misery will most certainly be the Lot and Portion of the Wicked and Impenitent in the next; *what Manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness!* and how *stedfast and immoveable* should this make us in the Ways of God's Laws, and in the Works of his Commandments! with what Indig-

Indignation and Abhorrence ſhould we look upon Sin; and with what Speed ſhould we flee from that dreadful Enemy of our Souls, that would rob us of our preſent, as well as future, Happineſs! how ſhould the Conſideration of theſe Things make us *take heed* Heb. iii. *leſt there be in any of us an evil Heart of* 12. *Unbelief, in departing from the living God!* and how ſtedfaſtly ſhould we reſolve *to have no Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs*, but to walk as *Children of Light* in the Ways of true Piety and Holineſs: and not to delay for one Moment the Care of our immortal Souls! *The Day is far ſpent, the Night is at hand*, and there is no Time to be loſt. We have a great Work to do: a Work that requires and deſerves our utmoſt Care and Diligence. If we perform it well, great will be our Reward in Heaven: for, *faithful is He that has promiſed.* And we may be aſſured that, if we are diligent and induſtrious in the Work which God hath aſſigned to us in this World, *our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord:* for, if *we have our Fruit unto Holineſs, our End will be everlaſting Life.* But if, inſtead of

Philip. ii. 12. *working out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, that is, with the greateſt Care and Circumſpection, we are negligent and remiſs in the Service of our great Lord and Maſter *Jeſus Chriſt*; if, inſtead of *living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World*, we lead vicious and wicked Lives, and ſpend our Days in Sin and Vanity; miſerable will be our Condition both here and hereafter: for, although God is a Being of infinite Goodneſs and Mercy, and is patient and long-ſuffering towards Sinners, being *unwilling that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance*; yet we muſt remember, that he is alſo infinitely juſt, and will aſſuredly vindicate the Honour of his Laws. All Sin and Wickedneſs is an Abomination in his Sight. *He is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity: and if his Wrath be kindled, yea but a little*, what will become of the Wicked and Ungodly! Nothing but a ſincere Repentance and Amendment of Life, will be ſufficient to ſecure them from the Vengeance which he hath threatened to pour down upon all obſtinate and rebellious Sinners: and true Repentance will moſt undoubtedly avert his Anger.

ger. He hath declared himself to be a *God merciful and gracious, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin*; and hath promised Forgiveness of Sins to all them that, with hearty Repentance and true Faith, turn unto him. *He hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked should turn from his Way and live.* And, in order to assure us of his great Love to Mankind and of his Desire to be reconciled unto us, *He hath sent his Son*, his only, his beloved Son, *into the World, to the End that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* John iii. 16.

It hath pleased God, of his infinite Goodness, to establish a most gracious Covenant of Mercy with Mankind through the Mediation of his own Son: and the Condition on his Part of the Covenant, namely, the Remission of Sins, is always ready to be made good, if we fail not, on our Part, of sincere Repentance and a thorough Reformation of our Lives. Our Saviour hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World. He hath suffered a cruel and

ignominious Death upon the Croſs for our Sakes; and by his Death and Sufferings hath purchaſed this Grace for us, that real Repentance, and the ſincere Endeavour of perfect Obedience, ſhall be accepted, inſtead of Innocence; but, without this Repentance, and renewed Endeavour of perfect Obedience, we ſhall not be accepted upon any Terms. The Sacrifice which he offered upon the Croſs, although of infinite value, will be of no Avail to us, unleſs, in Conformity to his Death and Reſurrection, we die unto Sin, and riſe again unto Newneſs of Life. Nothing but a good Life will entitle us to the Favour and Love of God: and, without his Favour, *we are of all Creatures the moſt miſerable.* Better had it been for us never to have been born, than to have made God our Enemy by leading vicious and wicked Lives. Let it then, above all Things be our great and conſtant Endeavour to make Him our Friend, who is the beſt of Beings, the ſovereign Good and Happineſs of all his Creatures, and the Fountain and Foundation of all our Comforts and Enjoyments in this Life, and of all our Hopes and Expectations

pectations in that which is to come. Let us make Religion the great Business of our Lives; and, while we have Time and Opportunity, let us prepare ourselves, by a Life of Virtue and Righteousness, for that great Account which we must one Day give. Let not the Pleasures and Vanities of this World, which will shortly have an End, make us unmindful of the great and momentous Concerns of Eternity.—O Eternity! how amazing are the Thoughts of it! Who, that considers what it is to live for ever in a State of endless Happiness or Misery, would not labour and strive, with all his Might, to secure the one and avoid the other! Now, this can only be done by a good Life: for *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* Heaven is prepared for those only who fear God, and live in a strict Endeavour to perform a perfect Obedience to his Will. *There shall in no wise enter into* that Holy Place *any Thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.* And those only are the Good and Virtuous, who have kept themselves from the Pollutions of this

Prov. xvi. 27.

wicked World, and have led a Life of Piety and renewed Obedience towards God, and of Love and Charity towards their Neighbours. To all others, that bleſſed Lamb of God will declare *he knows them not.* To *the Workers of Iniquity,* even that merciful and compaſſionate Saviour will ſay, *Depart from me.*—Dreadful Words! Whither muſt ſuch wretched Souls go, when they are bidden to depart from the Saviour of the World!—Whither, indeed, but to that diſmal Place of Horror and everlaſting Miſery *prepared for the Devil and his Angels!*

May God, of his infinite Mercy, give all of us Grace to ſee and follow the Things that belong to our everlaſting Peace, leſt they be hid from our Eyes, and all Opportunities of reconciling ourſelves to our offended God be for ever loſt and gone!—

May every one of us be perſuaded to hearken to the Advice of *Solomon: Fear God and keep his Commandments; for, this is the whole Duty of Man. For God ſhall bring every Work into Judgment, and every ſecret Thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.*—And may we always keep in Remembrance

Eccleſ. xii. 13, 14.

membrance that merciful Caution of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour; *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh.* Matt. xxv 13

A PRAYER.

O Moſt glorious Lord God, and merciful Father in Chriſt Jeſus, who haſt prepared for them that love thee ſuch good Things as paſs Man's Underſtanding; and haſt promiſed to give eternal Life to them who, by patient Continuance in Well-doing, ſeek for Glory and Honour and Immortality; Give me, I moſt humbly beſeech thee, a firm and unſhaken Faith in all thy Promiſes; that, being fully perſuaded of thoſe important Truths which thou haſt revealed to us in the Goſpel, I may make it the principal Care and Concern of my whole Life to pleaſe and obey thee in all Things. And, that I may obtain thoſe Things which thou doſt promiſe, make me

to love that which thou doſt command; and grant that, by the Aſſiſtance of thy Holy Spirit, I may be enabled to perſevere in the practice of a holy Life, even to the laſt Moment of my Days.

Let the Hopes and Expectations of that unſpeakable Happineſs, which thou haſt prepared for us hereafter, enable me to paſs through this Vale of Tears and Miſery with Chearfulneſs and Submiſſion to thy bleſſed Will, and to bear with Patience whatever Troubles thou, in thy great Wiſdom, ſhalt ſee fit to lay upon me.

O Lord! give me a Heart raiſed above the Vanities and Enticements of this World, and free from all the Pollutions and Defilements of it. Fix my Thoughts, my Hopes, and my Deſires, upon Heaven and heavenly Things; that, having always in View that Crown of Glory which thou haſt laid up for us hereafter, I may preſs towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus: and, being ſtrengthened by thy Grace, and ſupported by thy Holy Spirit, I may run with Patience the Race which thou haſt ſet before us; that, when the great Day of Retribution ſhall

come,

come, I may look up to my moſt merciful Judge with Joy and Comfort, and may hear thoſe raviſhing Words pronounced unto me, *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Grant this O merciful Father, through the alone Merits, and for the Sake, of my eternal Advocate and Mediator Jeſus Chriſt, *Amen.*

A MORNING-PRAYER *for a* FAMILY.

O MOST gracious God, and kind Father! in all Humility of Soul and Body, we present ourselves before the Throne of thy Majesty and Glory, acknowledging that we are thy dependent Creatures, and that from thy bountiful Hand we have received many and exceeding great Blessings.

By Thee, we were wonderfully made; by thy Power we have ever since been preserved; and it is owing to thy great Mercy and Goodness that we have not been cut off in the midst of our Sins, but that Thou hast been patient and long-suffering towards us, and hast given us this Opportunity of coming into thy Presence to renew our Praises and Acknowledgments to thy Divine Majesty. O Lord, thy Compassion fails not. By Thee we have been preserved the Night past; and

to thy Goodness we ascribe it, that we are brought in Health and Safety to the Beginning of this Day.

Accept, we humbly pray thee, of our unfeigned Thanks for all the Mercies and Blessings which thou hast been pleased to bestow upon us; and pardon, we beseech Thee, for the Sake of thy Son Christ Jesus, our great Unworthiness of what Thou hast done for us. Give us such a Sense of thy infinite Love and Kindness, as may engage us more and more to love and obey Thee, and make us afraid of every Thing that may be displeasing in thy Sight.

O Lord! vouchsafe us such a Measure of thy Grace and Holy Spirit, as may defend us against the Snares and Temptations of this wicked World, and enable us to overcome all our corrupt and sinful Desires. Give us a true Sense of the inestimable Value of our Souls, that we may make it the chief Care and Concern of our Lives to work out our Salvation with the greatest Care and Diligence, and to secure an Interest in thy Favour, which is better than Life itself.

With-

Withdraw our Minds from the Love of this World, and place them upon Heaven and heavenly Things. Give us Grace to use the Blessings which thou art pleased to bestow upon us, with Temperance, Sobriety, and Moderation; with an entire Trust and Dependence on thy fatherly Care and good Providence, and with a perfect Submission to thy blessed Will in all Things.

O Lord! root out of our Hearts all Pride and Envy; all Hatred, Malice, and Ill-will. Put away from us all Censoriousness and Uncharitableness, all Lying and Slandering, and whatever else is contrary to a truly Christian Spirit: and endue us, we most humbly pray Thee, with that Meekness and Humility which is in thy Sight of so great Value, and with all those holy and Christian Dispositions which thou lovest and delightest in.

Instruct us in all the Particulars of our Duty which we owe to Thee, our Neighbour, and ourselves. Guide us by thy Right-hand, and conduct us by thy good Spirit, through all the Business and Affairs of this Life. Teach us to act with Faithfulness

fulness and Honesty in every Thing that we undertake; and give us such a Dread of thy Displeasure, and such a Sense of thy continual Presence with us, as may secure us, by thy Grace, against all the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

Be with us, O Lord, this Day, wherever we go, and in whatsoever we do. Preserve us from the Dangers of evil Company; from the Deceitfulness of our own Hearts; and defend us more especially from those Sins, that are most apt to betray and ensnare us. Let thy Blessing accompany all our honest Labours; and vouchsafe us such a Measure of Health, and other temporal Blessings, as thou seest best and most fitting for us. We desire, O Lord, to leave ourselves, and all our Concerns, in thy Hands; humbly beseeching Thee to take us, and all that belong to us, under the Protection of thy good Providence; and so to bless, direct, and guide, us in this Life, that we may at last obtain that greatest of all Blessings, the eternal Salvation of our immortal Souls, through the Merits, and for the Sake,

This is to be omitted on a Sunday Morning; and what follows may be used instead thereof.

Sake, of thy dear Son, and our alone Saviour Jesus Christ: for whom our Souls adore and praise thy glorious Name, and in whose most holy Words we sum up our own, and the Wants of all Mankind, saying, *Our Father*, &c.

This is to be used on a Sunday Morning, instead of the foregoing Paragraph.

Dispose our Hearts, O Lord, we humbly beseech thee, to a serious Attendance upon thee in all holy Duties. Make us duly mindful of all thy sacred Institutions, and grant that we may never so far forget the Interest of our Souls, as to neglect the religious Observance of the Christian Sabbath. And as thou hast brought us to the Beginning of this sacred Day; so be thou graciously pleased to take us into thy Protection, and to assist us in a right Discharge of the Duties of it. Withdraw our Minds from the Care and Business and Pleasures of this Life, which will shortly have an End, that we may more freely attend upon the great Concerns of that far better Life, which is to last for evermore. Give us awful Thoughts of thy great Majesty, and a lively Sense of our own Wants; that our Prayers and Praises, and all our Services, may be offered

fered up in ſuch a ſerious and devout Manner, as may render them acceptable in thy Sight. Make us attentive to thy Holy Word, and to all the good Inſtructions that ſhall this Day be given us: and grant that we may not reſt in mere outward Performances; but, by a right Uſe of thy holy Ordinances, may grow in Grace, and become every Day better Chriſtians, and ſo improve in all virtuous and godly Living; that, when this ſhort Life ſhall have an End, we may dwell with Thee in Life everlaſting, through the Merits of thy Son, and our alone Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: for whom our Souls bleſs and praiſe thee, and in whoſe moſt holy Words we ſum up our own, and the Wants of all Mankind, ſaying, *Our Father*, &c.

An

An EVENING PRAYER *for a* FAMILY.

O MOST merciful and gracious Lord God! the great Creator, Preſerver, and Governor, of the World! Thou art infinite in Mercy and Goodneſs to all that call upon thee faithfully, and haſt promiſed, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name, thou wilt be in the Midſt of them. Look down, we humbly beſeech thee, upon us thy unworthy Creatures, who are here aſſembled before thee, acknowledging that thou art a God greatly to be feared for thy Power and Juſtice, greatly to be beloved for thy infinite Perfections and Goodneſs, and greatly to be praiſed for thy Bounty and merciful Kindneſs. But as for ourſelves, we confeſs, O Lord, that we are vile and ſinful Creatures; that we have, in many Things, acted contrary to thy moſt holy Will, and have neither loved thee, feared thee, nor obeyed thee,

thee, as we ought to have done. O Lord! if thou ſhould'ſt deal with us as we have deſerved, we could expect nothing from thee but the Severities of thy juſt Wrath and Diſpleaſure.

But, O gracious Father, who delighteſt not in the Death of a Sinner, look down upon us, we beſeech thee, in thy Son Chriſt Jeſus; and, for the Sake of his meritorious Death and Sufferings, pardon our many and great Tranſgreſſions of thy holy Laws; and grant that we may amend whatever we have done amiſs, and for the Time to come may be more careful to pleaſe thee, and more ſincerely devoted to thy Service and Obedience.

Convince us thorougly, O Lord, of the great Folly and Danger of Sin, and make us ſo afraid of offending thee, that we may abſtain from all Appearance of Evil, and do nothing but what is pleaſing in thy Sight. Let the Intereſt of our immortal Souls be our chief Care and Concern; and grant that we may live as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt, denying all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and living righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly, in this preſent World.

But,

But, as without thee we are not able to pleaſe thee, grant us the Aſſiſtance of thy Grace and Holy Spirit, that we may paſs through all the Temptations of this World, with Peace and Innocence and Safety; and enable us to bear up, with Courage and Reſolution, againſt all the Aſſaults of our great Adverſary the Devil, who is daily lying in wait to deſtroy us.

Suffer us not, O merciful God, to be led away by the vain and fooliſh Cuſtoms of this World, nor ſeduced from our Duty by the Company and Example of the Wicked and Ungodly; but grant that we may make thy Laws the Rule of all our Actions, and faithfully diſcharge our Duty in the ſeveral Stations wherein thy Providence is pleaſed to place us.

Make us duly mindful that thou art preſent every where, and privy to our moſt ſecret Thoughts; that we may never dare to do any Thing but what thou approveſt, and of which we may not fear to give an account at the great and terrible Day of the Lord Jeſus. O fit and prepare us for that ſolemn Time by a virtuous and holy Life! that, when we

ſhall

ſhall appear before the great Judge of all the World, we may be found in the Number of thoſe happy Souls, whom he ſhall then pronounce bleſſed.

Extend thy Mercy, O God, to all Mankind, and bring them to the Light and Knowledge and Practice of thy Laws.

Remove, we humbly beſeech thee, all Errors and Corruptions, all Diviſions and Diſſentions, from every Communion of Chriſtians; and grant that the Lives of thoſe who profeſs themſelves the Diſciples of Chriſt, may be holy and exemplary and ſuch as become the Goſpel of our bleſſed Saviour.

Reform all Things that are amiſs in theſe Kingdoms. Root out from among us all Irreligion and Prophaneneſs, all Uncharitableneſs and Animoſities. Pardon our great and crying Sins; avert the Evils that we have deſerved; continue the Light of thy glorious Goſpel among us; and give us all Grace to turn from the Evil of our Ways unto the Lord our God.

Bleſs our Sovereign Lord the King, and all that are in Authority under him both in Church and State. Make each of them,

them, in their ſeveral Places and Stations, uſeful and ſerviceable to thy Glory, and the Good and Welfare of this Church and Nation.

And, O Thou, who art the Father of Mercies, and God of all Conſolation, look down with Pity and Compaſſion, upon all thy afflicted Servants every where; give them Courage, and Patience, Comfort and Support; and, in thy good Time, a joyful Deliverance out of all their Troubles.

Send down thy Bleſſings Spiritual and Temporal upon all our Friends and Relations. Do good unto thoſe that have, at any Time, done or wiſhed us Evil; and vouchſafe to every one of us, and to all Chriſtians, whatever thou knoweſt to be beſt for our temporal and eternal Welfare.

And now, O Lord, we deſire, with all Humility of Soul and Body, to adore thy incomprehenſible Majeſty, and to praiſe thy great and glorious Name, for all thy manifold Mercies and Favours vouchſafed to us and all Mankind; but, above all, for thy aſtoniſhing Love in reconciling the World

World unto thyself by the Death and Sufferings of thy dear Son.

We bless thee for our Creation and Preservation, for our Health, Strength, Peace, and Safety; for the Comforts and Conveniencies of this Life, and the Hopes and Expectations of a far better, through thy tender Mercies in Christ Jesus.

O Lord, imprint in our Hearts such a deep Sense of thy Mercies, that we may shew forth thy Praises not only with our Lips, but in our Lives, by giving up ourselves to thy Service, and by walking before thee in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Lives.

We confess, O Lord, that we are unworthy of the least of all thy Favours; but, in Confidence of thy infinite Mercy and Goodness, we do in great Humility recommend ourselves, our Souls, and Bodies, and all that belong to us, to thy fatherly Care and good Providence; humbly beseeching thee, who art our only Safety and Defence, to take us this Night under thy Almighty protection, and to give thy holy Angels Charge over us, that no Evil comes near to hurt us.

Refresh our Bodies with quiet Rest and Sleep, and our Souls with the Comforts of thy Holy Spirit: and, when thou shalt think fit to take us out of this World, give us everlasting Rest and Peace in thy eternal Kingdom, through the Merits, and for the Sake, of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ, who hath taught us, when we pray, to say, *Our Father*, &c.

A MORN-

Holy Spirit to them that ask it; I am emboldened to implore his divine Assistance to strengthen my Weakness, to help my Infirmities, and so to fortify my Mind, that I may not be tempted above what I am able to bear, nor seduced from my Duty to thee, by the deceitful Inticements of the World, the Flesh, or the Devil.

Root out of my Heart, O God, all Pride and Vain-glory; all Bitterness and Uncharitableness; all Envy, Hatred, and Malice; and suffer me not to be led away by any of the foolish Customs and false Maxims of this World. And, O merciful Father, be thou pleased, of thy great Goodness, to endue me with that Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable; with that Meekness and Humility, which is in thy Sight of so great Price; and with that truly Christian Temper and Disposition, which thou lovest and delightest in.

Lord, sanctify unto me all thy fatherly Dispensations, and let every Thing, Thou shalt think fit to send me, prove a Blessing and Advantage to my Soul. Give

me Grace to be entirely ſubmiſſive and contented under all the Afflictions, Trials, and Diſappointments, which thy Wiſdom ſhall judge proper in order to bring me to thyſelf; and grant that by every Adverſity that ſhall befall me, I may be weaned from this World, and more cloſely united unto thee.

Make me always mindful of my own Frailty; of the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of this Life; and of the Eternity of the next. Give me Grace ſo to live, as I ſhall wiſh I had done when I come to die. Let not Sickneſs or Death ever ſurprize me unawares, or find me in a State unprepared; but grant that I may finiſh the great Work, which thou haſt given me to do, before the Night cometh, when no man can work. O let me live in ſuch a conſtant Preparation for my latter End, that how ſuddenly ſoever thou ſhalt be pleaſed to take me out of this World, I may be found ready for my great Account, through the Merits of my bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer Jeſus Chriſt.

Be

Be with me, O Lord, this Day in all Places, and upon all Occasions. Direct and guide, sanctify and preserve me. Keep me both outwardly in my Body, and inwardly in my Soul. Let thy Blessing accompany all my honest Designs and Undertakings; and grant that I may undertake nothing but what is agreeable to thy blessed Will. Give unto me, and all that belong to me, such a Measure of Health, and other temporal Blessings, as thou seest best and most fitting for us; but, above all things, give us thy Grace and Favour; that our Lives may be holy, our Deaths comfortable, and our eternal State happy and glorious with thee, through the Merits of thy Son and our alone Saviour, Jesus Christ the righteous; in whose most holy Words I sum up my own and the Wants of all Mankind, saying, *Our Father*, &c.

This is to be omitted on a Sunday Morning, and what follows may be used instead thereof.

Accept, I beseech thee, O most gracious God, my hearty Desires to glorify thee in an especial manner on this Day, which thou hast peculiarly sanctified for thy Worship and Service.

Upon Sunday Morning, instead of the preceding Paragraph, this may be used.

I bless thy holy Name, O Lord, who by thy Almighty Power madest the Heavens and the Earth and all that therein is, and preservest and governest all that thou hast made.

I bless thee, O Lord, who madest Man after thine own image, enduing him with Understanding, Reason, and Liberty; and making him capable of knowing, of loving, and of enjoying thee his Creator.

Above all, I bless and magnify thy holy Name, O Lord, heavenly Father, that thou hast given thine only Son, Jesus Christ, for the Redemption of Mankind; that he took our Nature upon him; that he died for our Sakes; that he is risen again from the Dead; that he ascended into Heaven, and that he there sitteth at thy right Hand, to make intercession for us; that he hath made known to us the Way to eternal Life, giving us his Word for our Direction, and his Holy Spirit for our Guide and Assistance.

Blessed be thy Holy Name, that thou hast appointed this Day, not only for a Rest from our ordinary Labours and Employments, but chiefly for a perpetual Comme-

Commemoration of these thy Favours, and for giving us stated Opportunities for thy Worship and Service, and for the Care of our immortal Souls.

My Soul desires to bless thee, that thou hast made me a Partaker of all these inestimable Advantages.

O Lord, prepare my Heart for attending upon thee in thy House, and afford me thy gracious Assistance in all the Parts of thy Service.

Let thy Word make deep and lasting Impressions upon me. Help me diligently to improve all Opportunities that shall be afforded me this Day, whether public or private, to the Glory of thy great Name, and the Benefit and Comfort of my Soul, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. *Amen.*

An Evening-Prayer *for a* Person *in* Private.

MOST great and mighty God! Thou art the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator, the Preſerver, and Governor of all things: thou dwelleſt in that Light, which no mortal Eye can approach; and yet diſdaineſt not to behold the Children of Men. Look down, I beſeech thee, upon me thy unworthy Creature, who am come into thy Preſence, adoring thy Majeſty, and acknowledging that my Dependence is wholly upon thee, who art the Author of my Being, and the Foundation of all my Hopes, both here and hereafter.

O Lord, I confeſs that I am a weak and frail Creature; my Nature is corrupt, and miſerably prone to offend thee. I find a Law in my Members warring againſt the Law in my Mind; which, I confeſs with Sorrow, hath too often prevailed againſt me.

me. The Pleasures and Profits of the World are too apt to engage my Affections, and to make me cold and remiss in the great and important Work of my Salvation. I have been guilty of manifold Neglects and Omissions of my Duty towards thee, and have not served thee with that Purity of Intention, with that Sincerity of Heart, with that Fervency of Spirit, with that Zeal for thy Glory, with that Care, and Diligence, and Constancy, that I ought to have done.

O Lord, if thou shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss; if thou shouldest call me to a strict Account for my Life past; what could I say unto Thee! or how should I be able to stand in thy Sight! If thou shouldest deal with me as I have deserved, I could expect nothing from thee but the Severities of thy Wrath and Displeasure: But, O gracious Father, thou hast revealed thyself to the Sons of Men, as a God merciful and gracious, forgiving the repentant Sinner, his Iniquities and Transgressions: remember then, I beseech thee, thy tender Mercies, which have been ever of old, and for the Sake and

Merits of my bleſſed Saviour, forgive, I humbly pray thee, all the Sins and Vanities, the Follies and Indiſcretions of my Life paſt. O! reſerve not my Sins to be puniſhed in the Day of thy Wrath and Diſpleaſure, but blot them out of thy Remembrance, that they may never riſe up to my Confuſion here, nor to my Condemnation hereafter.

O! enable me, by the Aſſiſtance of thy Grace, to reform whatever thou ſeeſt amiſs in the Temper and Diſpoſition of my Mind, or in any of the Actions of my Life; that I may love thee more, and ſerve thee better, and do thy Will with greater Care and Diligence, than I have yet done.

O Lord! keep up in my Mind a lively Senſe of my Duty towards thee, and of that great Account, which I muſt one Day give. Suffer me not, I beſeech thee, to fall into a careleſs and unthinking State, nor to be unmindful of that one thing needful, the Salvation of my immortal Soul. Make me ſo ſenſible of thoſe dreadful Threatnings, which thou haſt denounced againſt Sinners, that whatever elſe I leave undone, I may make it my chief Care and Concern to ſe-

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cure an Intereſt in thy Favour. And, O merciful Father, be thou pleaſed, of thy great Goodneſs, ſo to aſſiſt my weak and feeble Endeavours, that I may not be unſucceſsful in a Matter of ſuch vaſt Concern.

Root out of my Heart, O God, by the powerful Efficacy of thy Grace, all ſinful and corrupt Affections. Wean me from the Vanities and Pleaſures of this World, and give me a full Conviction of the Uncertainty and Inſufficiency of all Things here below. O! let me never ſeek for Reſt and Happineſs in the Enjoyments of this Life; but grant that I may daily aſpire after that eternal and unchangeable State of Happineſs hereafter, which thou haſt reſerved for thy faithful Servants; and to which, I beſeech thee, of thy infinite Love and Mercy, to bring me, through the Merits, and for the Sake, of thy dear Son, *Jeſus Chriſt*, our Lord.

Extend thy Mercy, O God, to all Mankind: In a more particular Manner, I pray thee to be gracious to theſe ſinful Nations to which I belong; to pardon our great and

crying Sins; to avert the Judgment which we have moſt juſtly deſerved, and to put away from us the Spirit of Profaneneſs and Infidelity, of Malice and Uncharitableneſs; that thou mayeſt delight to dwell amongſt us, and be our God, and we thy People.

Bleſs and preſerve our Sovereign Lord King *GEORGE*, and grant that all who are in Authority under him, may faithfully endeavour to promote thy Glory, and the Good and Welfare of this Church and Nation.

Look with Pity and Compaſſion upon all thy afflicted Servants: be a Father to the Fatherleſs; heal the Sick; ſupply the Wants of the Poor and Needy; and grant that whatſoever is wanting of outward Comforts to any one, may be abundantly made up by the inward Conſolations of thy Holy Spirit.

Bleſs all my Friends and Relations, eſpecially ——; reward all who have done me Good, and forgive all who have done or wiſhed me Evil; and vouchſafe to every one of us, from the higheſt to the loweſt,

what

whatever in thy great Wisdom thou knoweſt to be needful both for our Souls and Bodies.

And now, O moſt merciful Father, from an humble Senſe of thy great Goodneſs, I adore and praiſe thy glorious Name, for all the Manifeſtations of thy Love and Kindneſs vouchſafed unto me. I bleſs thee for my Being, for my Reaſon, and all the Endowments and Faculties of my Soul and Body; for my Health, Friends, Food and Raiment, and all the other Comforts and Conveniencies I enjoy; for thy continual Care and watchful Providence over me, through the whole Courſe of my Life; and, particularly, for the Preſervation and Protection of me the Day paſt.

Give me Grace, I beſeech thee, to make a right Improvement of all thy Bleſſings; and be thou graciouſly pleaſed to take me, and all that belong to me, this Night under the Care and Protection of thy Fatherly Providenee. Give thy holy Angels Charge over us, and grant us ſuch Refreſhment of Soul and Body as may enable us chearfully to go through the Duties of that Station

wherein

wherein thou haſt placed us. And when thou ſhalt be pleaſed to call us out of this World, O! let us be found in the Number of thy faithful Servants, through the Merits of our Bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer, *Jeſus Chriſt:* for whom my Soul doth bleſs and praiſe thee, and in whoſe moſt holy Words I ſum up all our Wants, ſaying.

Our Father, &c.

A PRAYER

A PRAYER, *which may be added to the daily* EVENING-PRAYER, *on the* LORD'S DAY.

I Again return my most humble and hearty Thanks to thee, O Lord my God, for the special blessings of this thy sacred Day; that I have been admitted to the great Privilege of joining with thy faithful People, in their Assemblies for public Worship, to offer up my Praises and Prayers to thy divine Majesty, in the Name of our blessed Redeemer; to hear thy holy Word read and preached by the Ministers of thy Gospel; and that I have had farther Opportunities for employing myself more privately in thy Worship and the Care of my immortal soul.

I earnestly beseech thee, O Lord, to pardon all the Wanderings and Disorders of my Mind, and whatsoever else thou hast seen amiss in my Attendance upon thee: and graciously to accept my sincere,

cere, though weak, Endeavours to serve thee.

Cause thy Word, which I have heard or read, to abide in my Heart, and to bring forth the Fruits of a holy and religious Life.

Help me, by the use of all the Means of Grace and Salvation, to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, fitting me more and more for seeing and enjoying thee my God, and my blessed Redeemer, in the Life to come: and grant, when I shall cease to praise and serve thee with thy Saints on Earth, that I may continue to be so employed with the blessed Spirits in Heaven.

I heartily beg the same blessings for all my Fellow Christians, recommending them and myself to thee, my heavenly Father, in the Words, and through the Intercession of Jesus Christ thy Son, our only Mediator and Advocate.

Our Father, &c.

A MORN-

A MORNING-PRAYER *for a young* PERSON.

O Lord, my heavenly Father, I humbly adore thee, as the Maker and Governor of the World, the Author of my Being, the Preſerver of my Life, and the Giver of every good Thing.

I heartily thank thee for the comfortable Reſt which I have enjoyed the Night paſt; that thou haſt preſerved me in Safety, and raiſed me up in Health.

I bleſs thee for all thy Goodneſs to me, ever ſince I came into the World, and eſpecially for the Advantages thou haſt given me, by the Inſtruction and Improvement of my Mind in the Knowledge of thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt my Lord.

Grant, O Good God! that the Senſe of thy Favours may ſo deeply affect my Heart, that I may ſhew forth my Thankfulneſs, in the whole Courſe of my Life.

I am

I am thine, O Lord, by Creation, by Redemption, by my Baptism and Christian Profession, by all the Obligations which thou hast laid upon me: I desire to be thine also, by a willing Dedication of myself to thee every Day of my Life, and by a constant and faithful Endeavour to approve myself to thee.

I beseech thee, in thy great Mercy, through the Mediation of my blessed Redeemer, to pardon all my past Offences, and to enable me, by thy Grace, to discern and to amend whatsoever is amiss in me.

Help me ever to remember the Christian Principles which I have learned, and the pious Instructions which have been given me; and never to depart from the good Way in which I have been taught to walk.

Incline my Heart to all that is good: grant that I may be modest and humble in my Carriage and Behaviour; chaste and pure in all my Thoughts, Words, and Actions; true and just in all my Dealings; respectful and obedient to my Superiors; innocent and inoffensive in my whole Conversation; faithful and diligent in the Discharge of all the Duties of that State and

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Condition of Life, wherein thou haſt placed me: and teach me to fear and love thee, my God, above all Things; and to do to all others, as I would they ſhould do unto me.

Make me perfectly contented with my Condition, and thankful to thee, who haſt given me all Things neceſſary for Life and Godlineſs. Let thy good Providence always take Care of me, and let me never place my Truſt and Confidence in any Thing but in thee.

Take me, I beſeech thee, into thy Protection this Day; keep me, if it be thy good Will, in Health and Safety. Preſerve me from the Vanity of my own Heart, and from the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil. Help me (through a Senſe of thy conſtant Preſence with me, and of the Account I am to give unto thee) ſo to govern all my Thoughts, Words, and Actions, that I may reflect upon them with Satisfaction at the Cloſe of this Day.

Let thy Bleſſing be upon every Member of this Family: Upon all my Relations and Friends; upon all, whom I ought and whom I deſire to pray for.

I hum-

I humbly commit both myſelf and them to thee, O my God, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour, and in the Words which he himſelf has taught me.

Our Father, &c.

An EVENING-PRAYER *for a* YOUNG PERSON.

MOST gracious God, my heavenly Father, as I began, ſo I deſire always to end the Day, with bleſſing thy Holy Name, and imploring thy Favour.

Honour and Worſhip, Praiſe and Thankſgiving, are due to thee from every underſtanding and reaſonable Creature. I heartily bleſs thee, that I am in that Number whom thou haſt made to ſerve and love thee, and that thou haſt moreover revealed thyſelf to me, by thy Son Jeſus Chriſt my Redeemer, and encouraged me to call upon thee in his Name.

I humbly thank thee for thy daily Care of me, and particularly for that good Providence

vidence which hath been over me the Day past; that thou hast preserved me from the many Evils to which I am justly liable; and hast bestowed upon me so many good Things which I have not deserved; especially, for whatsoever thou hast enabled me to do, which is acceptable in thy Sight, and which I can reflect upon with Satisfaction.

I humbly bewail, O Lord, the great Weakness and Corruption of my Nature, and the many Errors and Transgressions of my Life. I humbly beg thy Mercy in the Pardon of all my Sins, through the Mediation of my blessed Redeemer; particularly of whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in me this Day, either in my Thoughts, Words, or Actions.

Grant, O Lord, that the Sense of my Unworthiness may always keep me humble, and work in me an unfeigned Repentance of all my Sins; and let the Remembrance of them ever excite me to a greater Care and Watchfulness for the Time to come. Strengthen in me every good Purpose and Resolution. Whatsoever Part of my Duty I know not, do thou teach me; and wherein I have done amiss, help me to do so no more.

Leave

Leave me not, O Lord, at any Time to myſelf, nor in the Hands of my ſpiritual Enemies. Preſerve me from thoſe Circumſtances, that would prove a Snare or Temptation to me. Let thy good Spirit continually enlighten and ſanctify my Mind, directing and aſſiſting me through the whole Courſe of my Life.

Fill me with a Senſe of my conſtant and entire Dependence upon thee, that I may always commit myſelf to thy Care, and be ever ſatisfied with thy Diſpoſal of me.

Teach me ſo to number my Days, that I may apply my Heart to true and heavenly Wiſdom. Help me to live in a daily Preparation for my great Change, keeping my Conſcience void of Offence, both towards Thee, and towards Men: and grant that I may be always ſo employed, as I ſhall wiſh I had been when I come to die; that whenſoever thou ſhalt think fit to call me out of this World, I may readily and thankfully exchange it for a better.

Take me, I beſeech thee, into thy gracious Protection this Night. Preſerve me, if it be thy good Will, in Health and Safety,